

AN
ARTIST'S WALKS
IN BIBLE LANDS



Mount Hermon

AN

ARTIST'S WALKS IN BIBLE LANDS

BY HENRY A. HARPER

AUTHOR OF 'WALKS IN PALESTINE,' ETC.
WITH A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE
AND FIFTY-FIVE OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR.



THE TRADITIONAL SITE OF ST. PAUL'S ESCAPE FROM DAMASCUS

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THE NILE CANAL AT ALEXANDRIA.

P R E F A C E

THE late Henry A. Harper for many years was a greatly valued contributor to the pages of the *Sunday at Home*. These he enriched with many beautiful drawings of famous scenes and sights in Palestine, Egypt, and Syria. He also wrote a large number of descriptive papers and special Biblical studies to accompany his sketches. In this volume a careful selection has been made from the work both of his pen and of his pencil. Mr. Harper made many visits to Bible Lands. He often lived there for

Preface

months at a time. He was familiar with the language of the people, and he possessed in a very high degree the power of delineating the characteristic features of an Eastern landscape or city.

The purpose of the present publication is to preserve in a permanent form a representative series of his drawings, and of his own descriptions of the sketches and the scenes from which they were taken. The careful reader will find in both very much that throws a helpful and often a new light upon the meaning of Scripture.

Much time and thought have been given to the preparation and publication of the book in a style and form which would have met with the author's warm approval, had he been able himself to superintend the publication.



A WOMAN OF SAMARIA.





LUXOR.

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AN ORIENTAL AT PRAYER.



GENERAL VIEW OF JERUSALEM FROM THE NORTH.

PALESTINE

JERUSALEM TO-DAY

I HAVE had a new experience. For the first time I have entered Jerusalem by railway. In previous visits I have entered the city by every possible approach, but always on horseback. This is hardly a fit time to attempt to describe the route of the railway, and to open the eyes of tourists to the wild nature of the Judæan hills, though to thoughtful minds there is much on this route confirmatory of Old Testament statements.

That we were arriving at a season of drought was shown by seeing in middle distance carriages driving along the Bethlehem road enveloped in dust. Away on the left stretched the German colony, 'The Temple' colonists. This had such a strange, out-of-place look—its neat houses with red roofs, the lines of streets quite straight, the well-kept gardens,

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tall cypress trees, its trim church, schoolhouse—so tidy, so well kept, such an object lesson to all around, a lesson not learnt by either Arab or Jew. It seems impossible for an Eastern to be 'tidy'; the Jewish colony hard by is a living example of how *not* to be tidy. Yet—strange contradiction—one almost resented the clean look; long years of Eastern travel have made me so accustomed to dirt and disorder, that, much as one loves cleanliness at home, here it looked out of place. It looked like a 'model' village, with 'model' people, and had too much of the 'martinet' about it all. Ah, well! we shall have enough and to spare of dirt and foulness ere long.

Of all the wildest drives I ever took, that from the station to the hotel surpassed them all. The carriage—made when or where?—at least had strong springs; the horses were three abreast—one was literally *tied* on to the other two by strange straps, chains, bits of rope, string. These horses were 'screws,' but, like all Arabs, full of go! Go they did. With yells, lashes of the whips, all the Jehus set off, each trying to get in front of his neighbour, width of road or other traffic quite ignored. Had one horse gone down, every other must have gone over him—or over the wall! One looked round in astonishment at *not* finding—as yet—the pole of the following carriage in the small of one's back. Then, the dust! A sand-storm in the desert was the only thing I could think

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of; but there, one was not going headlong. Up the hill, down the hill, faint forms of horses galloping; of trees white, houses white, Valley of Hinnom full of white dust! By dint of hammering my driver I persuaded him to drive slowly, threatening him in the strongest Arabic all the time. Covered with dust, our throats lined with strange geological formations, a few miles of such a road, and we should have become fossils!—buried in dust!

Outside the walls, the mediæval character of Jerusalem is gone for ever: on the north-west side a huge quarter or suburb exists, a modern city of Greeks, Levantines, a few rich Jews; hotels, shops, huge convents—French and Russian, built or building; the English bishop's 'palace,' as the natives call it, 'college' say some, rivals that of other denominations. Where buildings do not as yet exist, the ground is littered with masses of stone fresh from the quarry, heaps of lime, heaps of rubbish; while, thronging every track or road, are herds of camels, carrying stones, mortar, or timber. These animals seem to resent their loads. They, the old-world carriers, made to bear modern rubbish! their haughty heads and scornful eyes resented the degradation.

Again, hurrying past, were some of the most ramshackle 'things on wheels' ever seen, 'carriages,' full of Moslems or Jews, bringing produce from the outlying villages. All the charm of the olive groves

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on that side is gone. The Golgotha, Gordon's tomb, are equally the scene of the builder's activity ; great walls are being constructed to mark the division of properties, or to make gardens for houses which are being erected ; close by, a puffing factory ! All poetry of the past is gone. Much, also, has been done to disfigure the Mount of Olives—on its summit is a tall look-out tower, built by Russia ! On the slope a hideous church, built by the late Russian Emperor to the memory of his mother, a building of considerable size, with ugly towers like the Kremlin at Moscow, utterly out of keeping with the landscape. Then, on the slope towards the wilderness, stand huge convents of various monks. Even on the Bethany road, houses disfigure the view ; Scopus is being dotted with ' villas ' !

Everywhere there is the same feverish activity in building. If you cross Hinnom, houses and walls are being erected by the Franciscans ; down in the valley, near Absalom's Tomb, high walls are being erected, marking off land bought either by Greek monks or Roman Catholics. Money for building is evidently furnished without stint, but by strangers, remember ; not by Arabs or by Jews. The chief builders are Russian or French. The ' alliance ' will some day have a rude shock, whenever the question of the possession of Palestine becomes a question of the day.

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Happily, no buildings mar the grand view of the city from the Bethany road, just at the turn where the side track leads to Bethany. You are above the village of Siloam; the road runs through *Jewish* graves, which are here straggling up the hill-slopes and spurs of Olivet. The south-east angle, with its huge stones, is opposite you. The eastern face of the wall, with the Dome of the Rock, tells grandly above it; while the southern wall, the Mosque of El Aska, the fine cypress trees and that portion of the city, is all but unchanged.

Inside the walls of the city, the change, wherever possible, is as great as the change outside the wall. Go where you will in Jerusalem, you will find new buildings, churches, or hospices taking the place of ruins or the rubbish heaps of a few years ago. At the same time there is an increased throng of new residents; Jews driven out from their old homes in Russia, Germans ever enterprising, Greeks, French, Italians,—all nations assisting in swelling the population. Even the Turk has caught the infection of progress as far as his faith will allow—a faith which looks backward and not forward. The Turk even paves streets, opens aqueducts, and uses the telegraph! . . . This half-hearted ‘progress’ is only another proof that the Moslem reign is doomed here, whatever may be its fate elsewhere. The Moslem succeeded because he represented a new race, with a new faith, and

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came to races which had exhausted their energy and had lost all belief in a maze of superstition ; but he has been conquered by his own prosperity. He ruled by the sword, and when he ceased to use that his failure began. When he is unable to use the toleration of Omar, then Moslem progress is arrested. A Christian priest listened to one of Omar's addresses ; the priest hinted that the Caliph was wrong. 'Strike off that old man's head if he repeats his words.' Such was the *toleration* of Omar. When that gentle instrument fails, decay is certain : it has gone on, is going on still. New buildings and the telegraph wire do not argue that the Moslem has received new life ; they are but signs of his decay.

Can anything be more strange, for example, than the juxtaposition of things at the Jaffa Gate ? On the right hand we have a modern house of business, a banking establishment and general store, with its new walls and lamp at the door. Across the way are the grim grey walls of the Tower of David—the Tower of Hippicus—left by Titus to show the world the class of fortifications Roman valour had conquered. It is to the Crusaders we owe the name 'Tower of David.' Herod, we are told, built three towers, Hippicus, Phasaelus, and Mariamne—the last named after his wife, whom he once loved, and afterwards murdered. These towers were said to have been marvels of strength. However much the levels of

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Jerusalem have changed—and this street is many feet above the old surface—yet we may take it that Hippicus represents a point from which the first wall started. The Turks have utilised the old works, and made them the citadel of the town, and from a high tower now waves the Crescent. No entrance to this tower has been found, and no chambers are said to exist in it. Being built on the solid rock foundation, no wonder Titus found it impossible to destroy it. Though part of the present building may be Herodian, yet there is little doubt that much of the masonry dates from that time of Hadrian when he rebuilt the city. This tower in the time of the Crusaders offered a most obstinate defence, and was the last fortification conquered. When the Moslems retook Jerusalem, and destroyed the walls, they again spared this tower. In the sixteenth century it was called ‘the Castle of the Pisans,’ but in later ages it has recovered its more ancient name.

Antoninus Martyr, A.D. 530, speaks of having ascended this tower and ‘chanted the Psalter.’ He asserts that monks had cells in it, and that it was a custom of Christians to go to this tower to pray. Sir Charles Warren identifies the larger tower known as ‘David’s Tower’ as the Phasaelus of Josephus, for he says the solid mass of masonry is decidedly Herodian, and this smaller tower which protects the Jaffa Gate he thinks is Hippicus. An ancient cistern was found

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here, also the remains of an aqueduct which once brought water into the city at this point. Mr. Henry Maudslay made some most valuable discoveries on Mount Zion in connection with the old Jewish fortification. He found that the natural rock had been scarped about forty feet, then above that there would be forty or fifty feet of strongly built wall; the result would be a splendid and impregnable fortification, which would defy any attempt to take the city on that side. Josephus, speaking of the ancient wall, says: 'Now the towers that were on it were twenty cubits in breadth and twenty cubits in height. They were square and solid, as was the wall itself. Above . . . were rooms of great magnificence, and over them upper rooms and cisterns to receive rain water. . . . They were many in number, and the steps by which you ascended to them were every one broad.' Mr. Maudslay found 'steps'; he found eighteen 'cisterns' in all. So here, we are certain, is a bit of that ancient city, 'the stronghold of Zion,' which David took, and which he called the 'City of David' (2 Sam. v. 9). When we recall that passage in Psalm xlviii. 12, 'Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks,' these discoveries of a rock-scarp forty feet high enable us to understand what David pointed to.

The Jaffa Gate was called in olden time 'the Fish Gate,' for through it passed the supply of fish from

Jaffa and the coast. It is sometimes also called the 'Hebron Gate,' for it is the nearest to the Hebron road. The building is Saracenic, and of considerable strength. It is the busiest gate of Jerusalem. Outside it is the Custom House; and if the 'Publican' of the Saviour's days acted at all like his modern representative, one does not so much wonder at the hatred the Jews had for him. I have often watched natives coming in with produce, and seen how harshly they were treated. When loaded camels came, the officers would bring out a steel rod, at least a yard and a half long, with a sharp point. This rod was thrust through the sacks in various places. Sometimes these camels had huge bundles of produce in coarse sacking; the rods were thrust through and through. The ostensible reason was to see whether anything was concealed in the corn; but the waste was great, and the sacks were much injured. It used to be a custom to close this gate with the others on Fridays, at the time the Moslems went to mid-day prayer in their mosques; and there is an old tradition that the Christians will retake Jerusalem on a Friday, at mid-day, while the faithful are at prayer.

Close to the foot of the tower is the market-place. The old custom of business near the city gate may here be seen. The chief trade is in vegetables from Urtas, Bethlehem, and other villages. *Roots of wood, relics of the old forests, are brought here for kindling*

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fires. Olives, grapes, eggs, and fowls are all thrown together in true Eastern confusion. A strange motley crowd can be commonly seen here. There stands an Arab shoe-black and a European on horseback. In front are loaded camels, water-carriers with the empty skins on their backs, while with flowing robes comes a Greek priest. Women carrying sun-shades show that Europeans feel the heat which an Eastern glories in. He will walk about with the red fez on his head under a sun which in like circumstances would be fatal to a European. Then there is a wooden shed, a coffee-stall for Arabs, while overhead you see the single wire which tells its tale of progress. Close by this Jaffa Gate, and inside the city, is the Protestant church and mission house, on Mount Zion. Close to that church is the Church of St. James, belonging to the Armenians; and at Easter thousands of pilgrims from Kars and Erzroum throng the church and the convent. People of every clime and of all shades of Christian faith may be met in the street and market-place near the Jaffa Gate.

In the English sense of the word 'streets' do not exist in Jerusalem, neither do they in any Eastern city. It is true, we read of a 'straight street' in Damascus, but even that is a misnomer, for it would be hard to find anything more winding than that 'street.' Eastern 'streets' are really alleys, lanes, or paths between houses, sometimes paved, more often not. We read

that in olden days the alleys between the bazaars were sometimes paved with marble, and of late years the Turks have tried to repave David Street. Those who have walked over it know well what a slippery path it is. The stones have been rounded by the traffic of ages. They are of every shape and size; bits of limestone, bits of marble, bits, in short, of every known stone, put together in true Eastern style—in sublime indifference to order. There are in some places gutters to carry off surface water, but these gutters soon become open sewers, receptacles for every kind of filth, in which offal of every kind festers in the sun. It is difficult enough to walk through David Street in the daytime, jostled as you are at every step by camels, horses, and donkeys; but still more difficult is it to walk through at night, when the flickering lantern of your attendant fails to reveal the numerous pitfalls of stinking mud into which your uncertain steps plunge.

And yet how fascinating it really is! for nations of every clime are to be met there, and these bazaars or streets are picturesque to the last degree. Arches are common, some with old Saracenic stones at their base, their tops of every kind of architecture. 'Order' there is none. Every age has built as seemed best in its own eyes. A considerable portion of the street is occupied by shops, where, in gloomy recesses, sit the patient owners waiting for custom. Nothing is more startling to the Western mind than to

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witness the stolid indifference of the owners of the shops to possible purchasers. You look in, and in a dark corner you see a man snugly coiled up on his mat, smoking his long pipe, a coffee-cup near, his slippers lying by his side. Or in another you see him dozing through the long day; while in a third you may see a group, all intent on story-telling. In one shop you can purchase silks from Damascus, at another fruit, or in deep recesses rarely or never visited by the sunlight you find the inevitable coffee-shop. Outside the stream of busy life runs past. The water-carrier passes with his cry, 'Water! water! O ye thirsty ones!' Or he is seen going back to one of the pools with empty skin on his back. Coiled up in every corner sit the veiled women and the half-naked children, all doing what Easterns delight in—nothing.

In another corner frugal cooking is proceeding, where with lentils and fat a mess is made which disgusts a European, but the very look of which is a delight to Arabs; or sitting over a small tray is the figure of an old man—fit study for a Rembrandt—his sole stock-in-trade a small heap of sticky dates, on which the flies are feasting. There he sits, indifferent to the passers-by, keeping a watch upon his store as if it were priceless, and as you look at it you estimate its value at the smallest possible coin.

Balconies are common; the supports of stone, the

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upper portions of boards, chosen apparently because they do not fit, and are not of the same size in any way. These are the places where the women of the house sit, and get the air, and see the passers-by. The streets and the shops are built of fragments of every age; old ruins have been hastily cleared out, and then made into habitations for the living, while forty to sixty feet below lie the pavements of the buried city of David and of Herod, of Roman and Greek. As you walk David Street you can see the habitations of the living *above* ground, but unless you explore you will have no notion of how many of the inhabitants live like rabbits in their burrows. Many trades even are carried on under the level of the present pathway.

This is, as I have said, a busy street. At Easter the native crowd is increased by Russian, Armenian, and Moslem pilgrims, and in no scant numbers English, French, and American tourists are present. Spanish and German Jews at the same time help to swell the population. Up this street oftentimes comes the procession of death. Here comes a funeral, the coffin preceded by men carrying flags. It speaks of some dead one who had sought to earn paradise by a pilgrimage to Mecca; and at the head of the coffin is a turban, which marks the sex of the departed. As the procession of death passes through the stream of life there rises the loud, shrill cry of the mourning

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women—that cry which whenever heard curdles the blood.

On a hot spring day the writer once saw here a wonderful sight. It was the time when the Moslem pilgrims were about to start for the so-called Tomb of Moses in the Desert of Judæa—a pilgrimage, by the way, most cleverly arranged by the Turks to fall at this season. At Easter time Jerusalem is full of fanatical Greek and Latin pilgrims, and so the Turkish rulers have arranged that they too will have a gathering at this time, and from all quarters of Syria fanatical Turks stream into Jerusalem to go on their pilgrimage. These Turks are housed by their friends, though vast numbers of them sleep in the sacred enclosure of the Haram. The Turk thus opposes fanaticism with fanaticism. He also has his devotees on the spot, and should ever the hated Christian try at this time to recover Jerusalem from the true believer, the Turk has his contingent to fall back upon.

The Moslem pilgrims were collecting close to David's Tower, at the top end of this street. Several sacred flags were unfurled, carried by pilgrims who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Near to them stood a huge Nubian with his tom-tom or drum, and when that began to beat the crowd began to form into a procession. The writer, with a friend, had determined to see all that was possible, but had been told that it was dangerous for Europeans to mingle

with these devout Moslems. We had confidence in ourselves and in the people. I was reassured, knowing as I did that my friend spoke every Eastern tongue. Why were we so curious? Because close to the flags stood a dervish, a very holy man. He was dressed in slight clothing, with bare arms and bare legs; but in his waist-belt was a perfect armoury of skewers and daggers. The music grew more vigorous, and the dervish began to dance. The procession moved on. Soon the holy man took a large skewer and thrust it through his cheek, shrill cries from the women hailing the deed. The operator moved on. His actions grew wilder, the cries became louder; another skewer, and then a dagger, were thrust through the fleshy part of his arm. From every balcony came cries of joy. We traversed the city, and when outside St. Stephen's Gate, leaving the ranks of the pilgrims and pushing in front, we saw the holy man stuck as full of skewers and daggers as a pincushion is of pins. But, strange to relate, there was not a drop of blood to be seen from his face or figure! Whatever the explanation, there were the facts.

The array of pilgrims streamed past us down the steep slope, and then they skirted the foot of Olivet. Women in their gayest attire were seated in groups under the trees, or collected in knots on the broken ground. I, struck by the picturesque sight of the pilgrim host from that point of view, happened to

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stroll up to one of their groups, sketch-book in hand. Immediately I was most bitterly assailed by one woman, who accused me of most improper and indecent conduct! and when I in amazement asked what I had done, a perfect chorus of reproaches burst out from the group. My friend, some distance away, was laughing at my dismay, and beckoned me to him, and then told me that my impropriety had consisted in standing near the group of women—a crime no Eastern would ever be guilty of. How strangely customs differ! It was a wonderful sight even in that land of wonders to see the multitude streaming past Olivet and Bethany, shrill cries coming all the time from the excited women. Flags were flying, Bedouin guards were dashing about, every now and then firing their matchlocks and pistols, and waving their swords in the bright sunshine. Such was the procession to Neby Músu.

Standing thus near St. Stephen's Gate, memory reverted to that eventful day in the history of Jerusalem, when, coming *from* Bethany, the Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Looking upon the wild scene of rejoicing, a better understanding seemed to come of that day when, with palm branches in their hands, and strewing their garments in the way, the enthusiastic crowd of Jewish pilgrims toiled up that same steep ascent, and with loud voice praised God for all the mighty works that they had seen. 'And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried,

saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!' The fickle multitude in the city was moved, saying, 'Who is this?' and the multitude of pilgrims, doubtless many of them from Galilee, answered with pride: 'This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee,'—pride that the citizens of the proud city, Jerusalem, should be 'moved' when the provincial Prophet came to the capital. These provincials saw in Jesus only 'a prophet.' It was the disciples who said, 'Blessed be the *King* that cometh in the name of the Lord.' And yet we know how blind they were. The kingdom they thought of was utterly unlike that kingdom which He came to set up—a kingdom which may exist in the poorest home, in the humblest heart, and which can glorify the hardest earthly lot. Long years have rolled by, and yet processions still tread that Bethany road. Man is still seeking out his own salvation there and elsewhere, and still re-echoes the cry, 'Who is this?'

It is perfectly true that the reign of the Moslem brings decay and death to these Eastern lands. 'No grass grows where the hoof of the Turkish horse has trod.' This is literally true; but can Christian England cast the first stone? In our crowded streets we see, alas! manifold evidences of vice and open sin; religious animosity of sect against sect is not unknown, while all around the multitudes are perishing not only for

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earthly food, but for that Living Bread which came down from heaven. And though we cannot but grieve over such scenes as the Moslem fanaticism in David Street, yet there is room for still more sorrow over the open defiance, in our streets and in our national and individual life, of that Saviour who from the beginning loved us, and 'gave Himself for us.'

Outside the walls, sloping down, the ground was white—bare. At the top of the hill and not far from the Zion Gate were the white tents of the Palestine Fund exploring party. Their position overlooked the hill-slopes where the important discoveries of Dr. Bliss have taken place. I had the good fortune to have a long talk with that celebrated explorer the very first night I was in Jerusalem, and on many days after. Then followed a visit to the tents. As we stood on the ground, the principal results of the discoveries of the year were pointed out.

Here I will only call attention to some of the 'Biblical' finds. Briefly then we may say that the discoveries as at present known show that all existing maps as to the extent of Old Jerusalem on its southern side are wrong. True, these maps were but 'guesses.' But again we see how dangerous it is even for clever men to 'guess' at Jerusalem topography.

What was the position until the last 'finds'? Taking the south-east angle of the Haram wall: we knew from Sir Charles Warren that a wall or portion

was underneath the *débris*, on Ophel; but now we find that the city wall extended more than seven hundred yards beyond that south-east angle of the wall.

A Jewish wall, sixteen feet thick (in one portion nineteen feet), extends beyond the Pool of Siloam. The dimensions of the true pool have been traced. Also it is proved that the wall included both the Pools of Siloam. The 'pool' spoken of in the sacred text has undoubtedly been found. It is hoped that the whole site may be cleared out.

Here again the spade shows how faulty all the guesses of authorities were, for these savants agreed to leave the pools outside the walls; and yet there was that clear statement in the Old Testament that the rulers and the people of Jerusalem clearly understood and valued the water supply; for does not the passage run: 'Why should the Kings of Assyria come here and find water?' We read of the steps taken to preserve that particular water supply. Was it reasonable then to think that on this side of the city two important pools would be left undefended and open to an invader?

Then again, a flight of broad steps has been found, apparently leading down to the pools. Thirty-two of these steps or 'stairs' have been uncovered. The explorers will follow them up and see where they lead to. Those who found the stairs consider them

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to be Jewish, those who have not seen them say they consider them 'clearly of the Byzantine age.' The interest about them is that Nehemiah (iii. 15) makes mention of certain stairs which 'go down from the city of David'; also in chapter xii. 37, of the thanksgiving procession which 'went up by the stairs of the city of David.' From the position of these stairs and the Pool of Siloam, now uncovered, it would appear reasonable to conclude that down these stairs our Lord must Himself have gone when He visited the pool. Probably the true meaning of these stairs will be found in later years, as the discoverers have opportunity to push on.

For those whose interest in Jerusalem excavations is confined mainly to early Christian churches, there has been a great 'find,' for the church of Eudoxia has been uncovered—all its plan laid bare. It was built across the stairs I have spoken of, and close to the Pool of Siloam.

The old wall found is in general eight feet thick, but in places the base wall is nineteen feet thick! Read any of the Old Testament statements as to the walls of Jerusalem, their strength, etc., and say if a wall of the thickness now found does not bear out the statements?

Another matter, but this it may be said is conjecture. It is distinctly asserted in the Bible (2 Chron. ix. 31) that David and Solomon were buried 'in the city of



JERUSALEM FROM THE SOUTH.

Under these hill-slopes the old city exists.

Village of Silwan.

David'; so also Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 33): 'They buried him in the chiefest [or highest] of the sepulchres of the sons of David.' The Revised Version says 'ascent of the sepulchres.' From other passages, both in the Bible and in Josephus, we gather that the Royal Tombs were close to this great flight of stairs; and it is the confident hope of all those who have studied the question that ere long we shall have the sensational story of the discovery both of David's tomb and also of Solomon's. To some this may seem an idle dream; I do not think so. The Jewish historian tells that these tombs were carefully hidden, but if the whole of the ground is examined with the care and skill already shown by Dr. Bliss, I do not see anything to prevent him finding those tombs. Eusebius and Jerome place the tomb of David at Bethlehem; the Roman Lady Paula expected to find the mausoleum of David at Bethlehem; so we cannot expect any help from the early Christian fathers.

Then again, there is a passage in Isaiah xxii., the 9th to the 11th verse: 'Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. . . . The houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool.' The Revised Version says 'a reservoir' between the two walls. What looks like a 'ditch' between two walls is now found. Nehemiah speaks (ii. 13) of 'the gate of the valley.' When Jerusalem was besieged

Jerusalem To-Day

by the Babylonians, we read (2 Kings xxv. 4): 'And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden. . . . And the king went the way toward the plain.'

This is now made quite clear, quite real by the discovery of those great walls, past the Siloam Pools, which are of course by the 'king's garden.' The 'way of the gate' was probably the one Nehemiah speaks of as the 'gate of the valley' (which I have already noted has been found). This 'gate between the walls,' this 'gate of the valley,' does indeed lead to the 'way toward the plain,' which of course is the Plain of Jericho, where we are told the 'Chaldees' overtook the flying king. So, bit by bit, the Bible statement is being proved by excavations. I believe that gateway has been found. Nehemiah speaks of the city as being so 'large'; the increased size we now see these walls enclosed fully justify the term 'large.'

How much farther the city extended south and east I will not venture to hazard an opinion; we must wait. Shafts without end, varying from the depths of five or six feet to fifty and sixty feet, were opened in every direction. Rarely was a shaft sunk but it came upon some fragment of the old city, a mosaic pavement, a bath-room, at one place a *paved street* or *road*. Then from these shafts galleries were driven along walls, or streets, everywhere finding some relic

of the past. More than a mile of galleries were open when I was there, now alas! all packed up and shafts closed; for bear in mind the difficulty of all Jerusalem excavations is this, that the city is densely populated. You cannot explore there, and outside every inch of ground is of great and increasing value. Every surface crop has to be bought from the fellahin; it would surprise even a market gardener in Covent Garden to hear of the value the fellahin puts upon every cabbage or cauliflower when they find Dr. Bliss wishes to excavate. There was an old Arab woman from Siloam village who asserted that the whole ground belonged to her. Every pay-day she acted a scene at the mouth of every shaft, threatening to throw herself down, and always appeased by a small dole of silver. Then the Jews refused permission to tunnel under their graveyards, though they were assured the tunnel would be far below any grave.

These, and endless difficulties, were cleared away by the tact and patience of Dr. Bliss. Perhaps it may be asked what sort of soil do these shafts and tunnels go through? *Débris*!—shattered, battered stone, mortar, rubbish! Standing at the edge of one shaft, I had my eye arrested by the smallness of the angular bits of masonry. Dr. Bliss said that was an average shaft. Of course often large stones were found, and some of the fellahin owners of the ground raised those stones and sold them to the builders of modern houses.

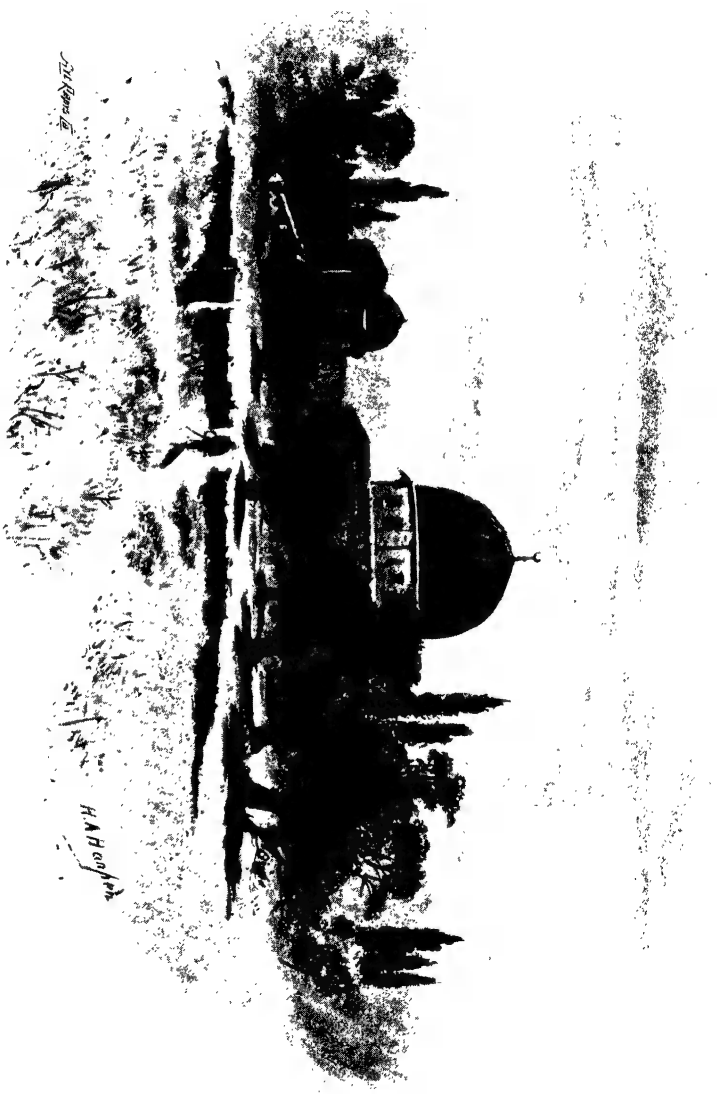
Jerusalem To-Day

So ancient Jerusalem is being dug up to rebuild the modern city!

How savage, how ruthless, must have been the destruction of Jerusalem is seen in those chips of masonry; remember gunpowder or dynamite were unknown. These shafts and tunnels are dangerous to work in, for the stuff slips; great skill and care have to be exercised in the work.

The large drawing I give shows where the shafts and tunnels were carried out, down that hill which is crowned by the Haram wall. *The street, the steps descend under those trees; under those crops are houses, streets, walls.*

Upon the site now occupied by a Moslem mosque, all history and all investigation seem to agree that once the Jewish temple of Solomon and that of Herod stood. The hill on which the mosque stands is opposite that occupied by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The platform on which the mosque is erected is called Haram-esh-Sherif, and is a vast artificial work which has raised the level of the sloping sides of Mount Moriah, except in one particular place. The building erected on this platform is known to Europeans as the Mosque of Omar, but the Moslems call it Kubbet-es-Sakhra, or 'Dome of the Rock,' for all this massive building is erected to cover a naked ridge of limestone rock which exists in its centre.



J. H. K. 18

H. H. 18

THE DOME OF THE ROCK FROM THE SACRED ENCLOSURE.

The platform is supported by walls, which have been built up from the slope of the hill. It measures 926 feet on its south face and 1,530 feet on its east face, the remaining sides being longer. This platform has nothing to do with the building, for the walls and the platform are Jewish, being authentic remains of that magnificent temple to Jehovah which once crowned this hill.

The reason why this Moslem mosque was erected is thus told by Arabic writers: Omar, the conqueror of Jerusalem, was a noble character. Simple as a poor Bedawi, history tells us how he made his triumphant entry into the city mounted on a camel, his whole camp furniture slung across his saddle-bow. A bag held at the one end dates, at the other rice. A leathern water-bottle and a wooden platter completed his equipment. The Emperor Heraclius asked, 'Why does he go in patched clothes, and not richly clad like other princes?' The answer of one of the faithful was, 'He cares only for the world to come, and seeks favour in the eyes of God alone.' 'What is his treasure?' 'Trust in God.' This Caliph, after performing his devotions, asked one, 'Dost thou know the place of the Sakhra?' He was shown where it was. Now the sacred rock had been converted into a dunghill by the Christians, as an insult to the Jews. Omar set himself to clear it of its defilement; his followers seconded his example, and carried away the soil in

Jerusalem To-Day

their garments. He then built a mosque over the rock. It was afterwards repaired by other rulers, who wished to divert their subjects from the Mecca pilgrimage.

The existing building goes by the name of 'Omar,' but his part of the work was small, and the present building was erected by Abd-el-Melik, A.D. 688. Of all the mosques I have ever seen, the palm must be given to this. It is full of gorgeous colour; its marble pillars and relics of older buildings are exquisite in their varied tints; there is much gilding, and the side chapels or apses are very fine, though one has recently been disfigured by a modern French chandelier. In the centre one, suspended by cords, hangs a rich carpet, to keep dust off the sacred rock, which is also surrounded by a low railing, to prevent the rock being touched. The Moslem considers this the place where Mohammed ascended to heaven, the foundation stone of the world. The walls are covered with enamelled tiles, with verses of the Koran running round; mosaics, stained glass, and gilding, all tend to make this a scene of fairyland. The Moslem has done this because he esteems it sacred to Mohammed.

But the rock has a still deeper interest to the Christian, for is not this rock the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite? Threshing-floors then were, and still are, placed on the highest exposed ridges of the hills, so that the wind could blow the chaff away.

Jerusalem To-Day

The rock looks untouched by the hand of man save in one point, and that is a hole in the centre. You cannot see this hole when standing on the floor, but go a few yards away, and there are some rude steps which lead down to a cave. This cave is under the rock, and when in this cave, which is dimly lighted by a lamp, you can see a glimmer of daylight from this centre hole. At one point in the cave the pavement is undoubtedly hollow. Stamp upon a slab, and you hear the ring which tells of a cavity beneath. Various are the legends attaching to this covered cavity. The skeykh of the mosque told me on one occasion that it was the mouth of the pit, and that 'he,' 'the evil one,' was there confined, and that if the slab were lifted up, 'he' would be let loose on the world! At other times it was called the 'Well of Spirits.' Sir Charles Warren discovered that vaults exist near this sacred rock, and found a gutter. This gutter commenced from the higher portion of the rock.

Sir John Mandeville, A.D. 1322, thus speaks of the Dome of the Rock: 'And in the middle of the Temple are many high stages, fourteen steps high, with good pillars all about, and this place the Jews call the Holy of Holies. No man except the prelate of the Saracens, who makes their sacrifice, is allowed to come in there; and the people stand all about in divers stages according to their dignity or rank, so that they may all see the

Jerusalem To-Day

sacrifice.' Sir Charles Warren remarks: 'From this it would appear that the present exposed rock was then concealed by a raised daïs, with steps leading down all round, in which case the gutter may have been used for carrying away the water when the daïs was washed after the Moslem sacrifice.'



INSIDE THE DOME OF THE ROCK, JERUSALEM.

II

THE OUTSKIRTS OF JERUSALEM

I FEAR I must say there is much sham interest in Jerusalem, or, to speak less harshly, less intelligent interest than one could wish to see. It is too much the thing to visit Jerusalem ; there is a fashionable interest in it. Do the crowds of tourists who visit Palestine ever think what a stumbling-block their conduct must often be to Jew and Arab? Christianity presents a poor spectacle to the Eastern. What with Roman Catholic, what with Greek processions and monkish mummary, and then the seeming indifference of the chattering crowds of Protestants, the bewildered Eastern turns with dignity away, and keeps to his old lights.

Leaving our camp, which is near the Damascus Gate, we follow the road bearing north. The wall of the city, which, by the way, is here built on the top of a scarped cliff, is on the right hand. We turn to the right at the angle of the wall, and by a broken, irregular road sharply descend into the valley of the Kedron. We pass over a bridge, but there is no water now in

The Outskirts of Jerusalem

the sacred brook ; *débris* from the ruined town in the past has filled up the bed of the stream. On the immediate left is the so-called Church of St. Mary, buried in the bowels of the earth, a long flight of steps leading down to it. We descend. The church itself is well worth the study of an artist ; but I consider the legend that it contains the tomb of Mary utterly devoid of truth.

Reascending, we find ourselves quite close to the Garden of Gethsemane belonging to the Greek Church. The olive trees are small, and the officials, I was told, hesitate to open the garden till the trees are grown. In the Garden which belongs to the Roman Catholics the trees are very old and much decayed. It is surrounded by a high wall ; but admittance is easily obtained by payment of a small fee to the monk in charge. There you are shown the Tree of Agony ; little paths and flower-beds deck the ground, the beds being surrounded with low fences painted green ; while in the wall tawdry majolica plaques are placed, representing events of that awful night. The whole looks like a suburban tea-garden. I doubt if this was the place or these the trees which saw our Lord's agony, for are we not told that Titus cut down the trees round Jerusalem to make stages for his war engines ? Still, if you are fond of listening to tradition, the monk in charge will tell you much ; he will show you where he says all the events of that night of sorrow took place, even to the indentation

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.



The Outskirts of Jerusalem

on the rocks where the disciples slept, and left the print of their forms! He did seem rather puzzled by the question I addressed to him—‘Tell me, were rocks soft in those days?’

And now we pass on to the slope of Olivet, to where lie thick the Jewish graves; so close together are they that they form a pavement. They creep up Olivet—they descend into the valley. Some few have headstones, often bits of columns, relics of old time. Some of the flat stones have cup-like hollows in them, to collect water for birds, I was told. Jews come from all parts of the world to be buried here, expecting the Last Judgment and the appearance of Messiah in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The effect of these graves is certainly unpleasing, for no trees are planted, as is so often the case in Turkish burial-grounds. Right across the valley and under the wall are Moslem tombs; the faithful wish to lie there, so as to be near the bridge which, they believe, is to span the valley in the Day of Judgment.

We will take a steep path close to the Garden, and ascend to the Mount of Olives—this path is probably the one David took when ‘weeping he went up’ the mount, for the path is old, deep worn, and lies in the slight hollow between Scopus and Olivet. As you ascend you notice the fields are divided by stone walls, in which oftentimes you find fragments of broken columns and bits of carving: once I found a Greek inscription

The Outskirts of Jerusalem

much defaced. The layer-like character of limestone asserts itself all over the mount. Old wells abound, and care is required in walking about. I have long had reason to believe this side of Olivet was a park or suburb to Jerusalem at the time of our Saviour's earthly ministry.

Camping under the tower of the mosque which is on the summit of Olivet, I was enabled to study the whole country: the views are very extensive and grand. Jerusalem lies fully exposed to the eye of the spectator, and the views stretch on the one hand into Moab, to Bethlehem, and other well-known regions. The tradition which has marked this, the summit of Olivet, as the site of our Lord's ascension I consider quite unworthy of belief, and contrary to the reading of the sacred text. A ruined Greek church stands close to the mosque, and in this church is a Mohammedan place of prayer; and here also is shown a rock on which the faithful (or the credulous) discover the impress of our Saviour's foot when He last pressed this earth! I spent many days on the summit. On one of my visits I was snowed up—tents were buried under snow, and but for the kindness of the sheykh of the mosque I believe I should have died of cold; but he gave me his best room, the haram, in fact, and my men camped in the mosque. It was a wonderful time, the effects perfectly maddening to an artist, to see Jerusalem and the near hills white

The Outskirts of Jerusalem

with snow, wild storms descending over it, and through the openings in the clouds the distant Moab hills pink and red in the full blaze of Eastern sunlight.

Never shall I forget another evening, when the storm-wind threatened to blow the whole building away, and as I was sitting up listening to the wild gusts, the floor seem to lift and reel, while my men rushed out into the open air with wild shrieks and cries of earthquake. The shock was repeated. I think it is too often forgotten how frequently earthquakes are mentioned in the Old Testament. Josephus also speaks of one of appalling magnitude in the days of Uzziah. Amos (i. 1, 2) prophesies one, and says: 'The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem'; and Zechariah (xiv. 4, 5) speaks of a still more terrible one to come, foreshadowing as it were that awful day of Matt. xxvii. 51-54, when 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.'

To understand the expression Mount of Olives it is necessary to say that Olivet is the highest summit of a ridge, which northwards includes first Scopus, then Olivet, the ridge ending beyond Bethany. It is not, as people think and artists will represent it, an isolated hill—like Primrose Hill in London. The face opposite Jerusalem is now, and must always have been, cultivated, but on the eastern side the desert comes sharply up. From that side fine views of the

The Outskirts of Jerusalem

Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley are to be obtained ; and here, too, runs the road which seems to have been the route David took when fleeing from the revolt of Absalom. Olives and figs are the only trees which now grow on Olivet, though some Germans are trying the cultivation of grapes.

Though the views of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives are so fine, and fairly well known from drawings and photographs, there is yet one which I delight in, which as far as I know has never been described, and that is the view of the city from the Hill of Hinnom. Let us leave camp in the dark, and find our way as best we can to the ridge of rocks over the Valley of Hinnom. When the first rays of sunlight, coming over the shoulder of Olivet, fall on the town, what is it we see? We are nearly opposite that angle of the great wall known as the south-west angle ; that wall glows in amber light. The Mosque of El Aska, and the Dome of the Rock, the various minarets, the domed roofs, are all in exquisite tones of white, pink, and pale reds. Blue columns of smoke ascending straight up tell that the people are astir. The cypress trees in the Haram enclosure, the pink blossoms on the pomegranate trees, with the tender greens of fig, all catch the morning ray ; but what of Siloam village and the king's gardens—the rugged base of Zion hill? All these are *lost* in the pure white wreaths of the night-mist! As the sun touches that mist it becomes



MOUNT ZION.

'Zion . . . shall be ploughed as a field.'—MICAH iii. 12.

The Outskirts of Jerusalem

rose-tinted, and then it fades away into the heat of day ; but while it lasts it is a dream of heavenly beauty. Many is the morning I have studied effects like this of the night-mist around Jerusalem, till even now in her desolation she seemed 'descending out of heaven.'

One day, as I was coming away from this point, as I descended the ridge, Zion came full in view. I had often seen it before, and yet to-day I was forced to pause. I asked if there was any water left, and, finding there was, braced myself for another sketch. The woodcut will show the view. Some hours afterwards, passing the Jaffa Gate, I met an old friend, a clergyman. One thought in my mind, I said, 'Do tell me, is there not some passage in Scripture which says Zion shall be ploughed?' 'Yes,' was the answer ; 'in Micah iii. 12: "Zion for your sake shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps."'

On Mount Zion stands the Protestant church and and its vicarage house. Hard by is the little burial-ground ; and in the Zion quarter too, within the walls, live the lepers. Never shall I forget one Sunday, when, too early for church, I strolled with a friend past their poor dwellings. They came out like a swarm of flies, and, holding up their withered limbs, implored alms. All the silver we had was soon on the ground, and over the slippery, uneven stones we fled. To this day I shudder as I think of the peculiar horror which

The Outskirts of Jerusalem

overcame me. On the lower side of the ridge of Zion lies the Jew quarter. How well I recall the horrors of night visits to the synagogues about here, and the sickening stench! The flickering lanterns carried by your attendants reveal not all the holes and pitfalls of the ruined streets, and in an unlucky moment you may find yourself in a pool of filth. Many fragments of antiquity are built into the walls of these foul streets. How different to the days when the royal palaces stood on Mount Zion and Mount Moriah!

Now that we are inside I must briefly speak of one scene which touched me very much—the Jews' Wailing-place. It has been often described; but who can hear the Jews, travellers mostly from distant lands, raising their long wail without emotion? 'Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold, see, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.' Some say these wailings are all make-believe; I do not agree with them.

I once received an invitation to a Rabbi's house to witness the Passover. The whole event was in exact accordance with Mosaic direction. But I noticed one thing—there were three cakes of unleavened bread on the plate. The middle cake was taken and broken, and an arm-chair was placed near the open door, with plates and herbs underneath. Afterwards the Rabbi

The Outskirts of Jerusalem

was asked if there was any meaning in this; and the answer was: 'Yes. You know we expect Elias, and when he comes it will be suddenly, so we leave a chair and plate always ready.' Startling words! But little do these wailing wanderers know that Elias has already come.

Every thinking man must be saddened as he witnesses the fearful ceremonials enacted at Jerusalem. How strange that here in this land, which our Master's feet trod, Christians should so degrade and falsify His pure love by worse than heathen rites! What shall I say of the ceremonials of Good Friday by the Roman Catholics, which made my native servant whom I had brought from Egypt inquire of me: 'Sir, do you Christians crucify the Lord Jesus every year?' Or of the Greek holy fire? I shudder as I read my notes, and recall in mental vision the scenes they represent. Priestcraft and religious bigotry are sad enough anywhere—deeply sad here.

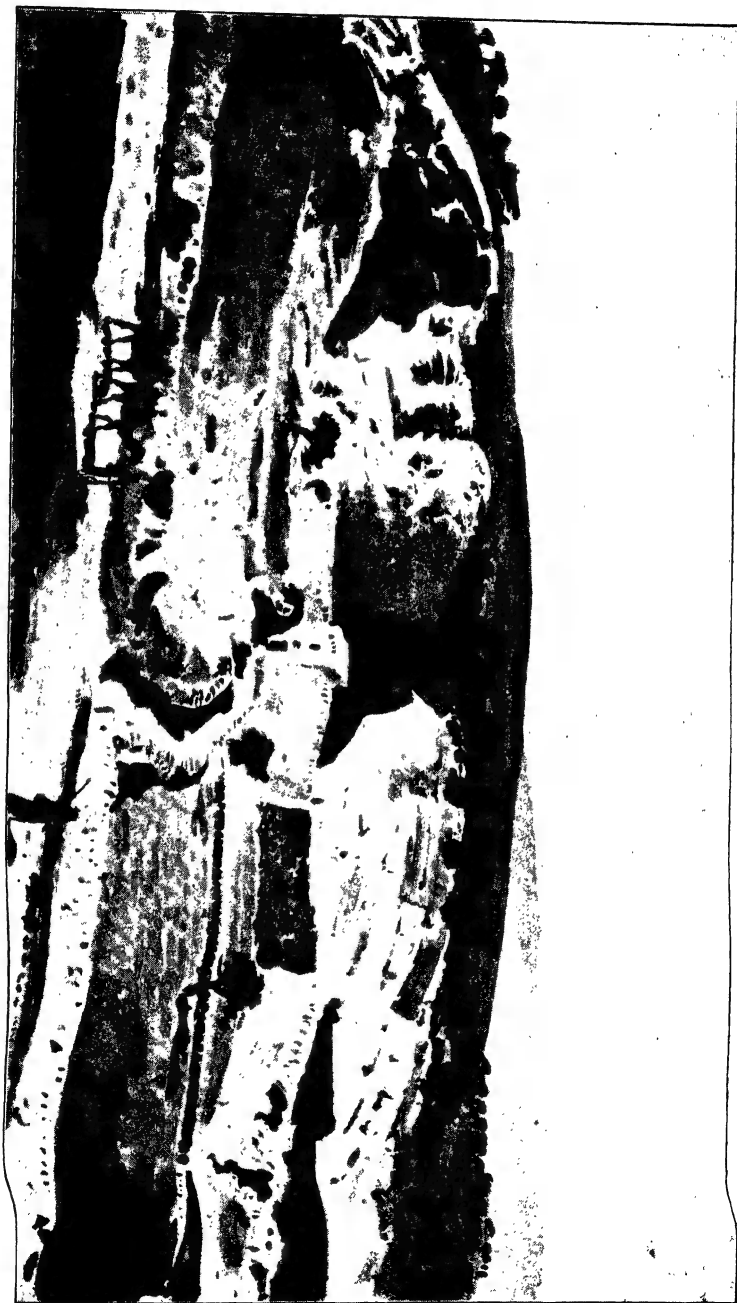
III

GOLGOTHA

FROM the earliest times the walls of Jerusalem have ever been a subject of interest. Those early inhabitants of Jebus thought their walls so strong, so unassailable, that they taunted King David. They told him that 'the blind and the lame' were sufficient to defend their city against his army. We know that it was only through Joab going 'up the 'gutter'—that secret way the old Jebusites had made to the water supply, which 'gutter' or way was discovered by Sir Charles Warren, when he was employed by the Palestine Exploration Fund—that the city of Jebus was taken.

We know also how the Psalmist speaks with exultant joy and pride of the walls. He calls upon the spectator to note well the strength of Zion's bulwarks. Later on, Nehemiah is full of despair and grief, when he sees the broken walls of the beloved city; his first care is to rebuild and strengthen those walls.

So to the Christian of to-day the walls of Jerusalem have a great and increasing interest. The desire to



SUPPOSED SITE OF CALVARY.

know if the present wall anywhere represents the position of the old wall, and if it carries with it the solution of the question, Which is the true site of the Place of a Skull?—the Golgotha where our Lord was crucified—is strong.

Of course the three Churches—Greek, Latin, and Armenian—assert that the true site is covered by the churches of the Holy Sepulchre. They can point to past ages of belief, to the multitude of pilgrims in the past, nay, even to the crowds of pilgrim in the present. But nothing that is merely old is accepted without inquiry to-day, when all pretensions are tested and sifted. Many a belief held by our forefathers is now found to have had no real foundation in fact.

Let us very briefly see on what grounds this site of the churches was selected. When the pious Empress Helena visited Jerusalem, and asked the monks, ‘Where was the place of crucifixion and the tomb of Christ?’ they were compelled to admit they did not know.

The very early Christians, who had been scattered abroad, had left no record of the place. Their minds had not been so much directed to the place of the death as to the greater fact that Christ had risen, which to them was the evidence of His divinity. But the day was now at hand when, through the piety of an Englishwoman (for Helena was born in England), the Church was to have a new interest in sites and caves.

Golgotha

Many are the stories related : one, that a statue of Venus stood over the site, and that on its being destroyed the rock was found ; another, that a monk had a dream which directed attention to the spot. On digging—this tradition alleges—three crosses were found ; one had the inscription written by Pilate still attached ; also the holes in which those crosses had been placed were discovered ; then, when the dead body of a criminal was placed on the rock, it came to life ! This and many other ‘miracles’ satisfied the monks. The pious woman believed them, and gave her money for the building.

For a moment let us go back to the question of the walls. Recent discoveries have shown that Jerusalem on the south-east side extended quite up to, if not beyond, the Valley of Hinnom. At present we cannot say how far they went on that side, but all the work of the Palestine Fund excavations goes to prove that Pilate's Judgment Hall was towards the north-west of the city. That north-west wall does, I think, undoubtedly stand on an old site ; the present Damascus Gate is proved to stand on the site of an older gateway. The line of wall from that to the northern angle also undoubtedly stands on the site of an older wall, for there you find the living rock has been scarped towards the north angle. This scarp rises to the height of thirty to fifty feet ; beside that there



THE PLACE OF A SKULL.

Golgotha

The north road runs outside this ditch, which is on your right hand going north. On your left hand across the road is a bank of rock broken away in places. Some two hundred yards away from the gate, lying back from the road, is a remarkable cliff, commonly called Jeremiah's Grotto. We shall have more to say about this later on, for we believe that this cliff is the Place of a Skull, the Golgotha.

Let us first see if the Bible will help us in our search. There is little that is definite as to place, but that little most important. St. Luke (xxiii. 26) relates how they compelled Simon, a Cyrenian, 'coming out of the country,' to bear the cross. This I have long considered gives us proof on which side of the city Christ was crucified.

Four roads lead, have ever done so, into Jerusalem. That from the south has ever been called the Hebron road; that from the west, the Joppa road; that from the east, the Jericho road; but the north road was the road which led 'into the country,' for it led to Bethel, Samaria, Galilee, Tyre, Babylon, and beyond. So the Cyrenian would naturally enough be coming along that road.

Then we read that 'they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads' (Matt. xxvii. 39), so there must have been a road near. Then again we are told that the 'women' and others 'stood afar off' (Luke xxiii. 49), and saw the crucifixion. Then comes Heb. xiii. 12,

Golgotha

which says that 'Jesus . . . suffered without the gate.' Now this last verse is all conclusive, for by no possible freak of fancy can any one imagine a wall and a gate which should leave the present churches of the Holy Sepulchre outside. They are well within the city on the north-west. The old rock-scarp, ditch, and road prove that on that side the present wall occupies the site of an older wall.

Well, but how comes it that you think the Grotto of Jeremiah is Golgotha? First, the title Grotto of Jeremiah is simply a stupid translation, altogether faulty, of the Arabic word by which this remarkable cliff was called. That Arabic word means 'the rent.'

Let us pause for a moment to note that crucifixion was not a Jewish form of death. 'Stoning' was the appointed Jewish mode of death for criminals, and it was to be 'without the camp'—in later times, 'without the city walls.' Then arises the question, Was there any 'appointed place' outside the walls of Jerusalem at this time? The Talmud, with other Jewish authorities, written A.D. 150, asserts that this so-called Jeremiah's Grotto was 'the place of stoning,' therefore the place of public execution, therefore the place where our Lord was done to death. To spare Him no insult, to inflict every disgrace possible, the chief priests and rulers crucified two thieves with Him. 'He made His grave with the wicked.' Golgotha, 'the Place of a Skull,' was as well known to the Jerusalem Jews

Golgotha

as Tyburn Tree or Newgate was known to our fathers. St. John (xix. 17) says: 'And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha.'



THE OLD ROCK-
SCARP.

I think it most important to note the words 'into a place.' This would be such a true description of the amphitheatre backed by this cliff. St. John writes as one quite familiar with the place—indeed, every

Golgotha

one in Jerusalem must have known it and the apostle seems to me to take it for granted that it was so known. So 'into' that space at the foot of the cliff the awful procession passed.

Again, St. John (xix. 41): 'Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre': note 'in' the place, also 'in' the garden the new tomb. It was a rich man's tomb. Jews cut out their tombs from the face of cliffs, as one can see everywhere. The poor were buried in pits—holes in the ground. The rich, as Job mentions, cut their tombs out of the rocks. There was a garden near the place of stoning. There is a garden there still. There are many tombs, some discovered as recently as 1897.

The Talmud gives details as to the mode of death. The condemned man was to be taken to the top of this cliff, thrown down, and if found to be not quite dead, he was then stoned to death.

All Moslem traditions speak of this place as accursed. Till quite lately Jews objected to pass the place at night, and spat to express their disgust; they abhorred it as the 'place of stoning.'

I know that some assert that our Lord was crucified at an especially selected place. There is no hint of this idea in the Bible. He suffered as a criminal, as one with other criminals. He was executed at the common execution ground. If we go back

over every statement in the Bible, I think every requirement is met by this Jeremiah's Grotto ; and as I have once and again stood before this rock and looked at that awful gash down the upright face of the cliff,



THE RENT IN THE ROCK, PLACE OF A SKULL.

Golgotha

I have felt that I stood at the place where the 'rocks were rent,' and the world's tragedy fulfilled.

For twenty-five years I have known this place, sketched it from many points of view, always and ever impressed with its resemblance to a gaunt skull. Thankful, too, that, owing to the fact that the summit of this cliff was chosen by the early Moslem conquerors as their place of burial, so making it sacred to the Moslem, as long as he holds sway in Jerusalem no chapel or shrine can be erected on it. A portion of the cliff and ground has been bought by public subscription raised in England. A wall has been built to prevent injury, and the great cliff will be preserved.¹

¹ Since the above was written, my attention has been called to a book by Sir J. W. Dawson, F.R.S., *Egypt and Syria*, published by the Religious Tract Society in 1887. On pages 102 and following that eminent writer expressed his opinion that this is the true site of Calvary.



FIRST VIEW OF JERUSALEM (MOUNT ZION), FROM THE BETHANY ROAD.

IV

GETHSEMANE

‘**W**HERE was a garden.’ So runs the sacred story. We know from other passages that the Lord Jesus loved flowers. They, indeed all Nature, reminded Him of the Father. So one is really thankful that a garden has been reproduced at Gethsemane, though I do not say that this garden is on the site of the one frequented by our Lord. Old as some of the olive trees are, they are not more than representatives of those olive trees which witnessed the agony. The tall cypress trees, of course, are of recent date.

Anyhow, we may be thankful that the idea of a garden is kept up. One would have liked it better had the place been more Eastern in character—a place where olives, figs, pomegranates, or oranges were growing, while scattered about would be flowers, more like an old-fashioned English garden, in fact; the present place is too trim, and many of the flowers are not Eastern. I should have liked to see all those choice flowers which in the East deck the very

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pathways. The very high wall which now surrounds the garden shuts it out from the busy world, situated as the place is, just where the main track comes down from the Mount of Olives, and runs into the Bethany road, which is at right angles to it. But for this wall the garden would be a noisy place.

I saw it last when I made my sketch in 1898. It was early morning; I had passed the whole night on the Mount of Olives. I had gone up from Bethany one afternoon, seen the sunset, watched the night dew as they closed in on the Holy City, seen the moon rise, then full moon over Jerusalem! a sight never to be forgotten; and, with tired body and aching eyes, had been roused to enthusiasm by the sunrise. The Hill of Zion and the 'upper' city caught the first rays of light, and gradually the whole city seemed like a heavenly dream of colour. The moon was now fast sinking into mist, while from the Valley of Jehoshaphat the night mist was lifted up in wreaths, now to be touched with sunlight, then to vanish in the day.

Utterly tired out, I now slowly wended my way down the rocky path till Gethsemane was reached. There such a sweet calm pervaded all. The Garden lay in shade. Over the wall of the Garden rose the Hill of Jerusalem, crowned by the eastern wall of the ancient city. This wall of the city lay in golden light. This morning light brought into especial

prominence the Golden Gate, or, as the Arabs call it, the Gate of the End, which fronts you. That gate is shut, closed up with masonry, waiting till He shall come again!

This gateway is worthy of some attention, for it stands on the foundation of a much older one; it was walled up by the Moslems, they having a tradition that the Christians will re-enter the city through it. This was the 'East gate' of the Bible, the one by which our Lord entered Jerusalem on His triumphant entry (Mark xi. 1-11). Now if we turn to Ezek. xliv. 2, we see a remarkable prophecy which seems to bear out the Moslem tradition: 'Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.'

I was so fortunate as to find the little door into the Garden open. The monk usually in charge was not there, so I could wander in the shade and enjoy the quiet, also without any interruption make my sketch.

Was this indeed the place where, kneeling on the ground, the Saviour prayed, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me'? Then immediately there follows: 'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' Here, in this bitter agony, the cry from our Lord still is, Father. If we read St.

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John, chapters xiv. to xvii., we shall see how constantly our Lord uses this tender word Father.

Do we realise as we look on the picture that this indeed may be the place from which this agonising cry went up, where the Lord surrendered His will—the human will—to the Divine, so that redemption might come to all? The pure lilies—types of Him—so pure, so sinless; the blazes of scarlet and red blossoms—types of the sin for which He died.

With chastened hearts we left Gethsemane ('the oil press'—that is the true translation of the word), where Jesus was crushed to the earth by the load of a world's sin, yet sustained by the power of God.

'Go to dark Gethsemane,
Ye that feel the tempter's power;
Your Redeemer's conflict see:
Watch with Him one bitter hour:
Turn not from His griefs away;
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.'



BETHANY.
(From the Mount of Olives.)

V

BETHANY

MOSES said: 'The ways of God are not your ways, nor His thoughts your thoughts.' This truth is pressed very strongly on the mind as one wanders amidst the scenes of our Lord's life on earth. Born in a manger in the Bethlehem inn, a helpless babe, surrounded by wayfarers and pilgrims, He, the greatest Pilgrim of them all, came not in royal state and pomp, as fervent Jews hoped He would; not as 'a strong man armed,' to claim His kingdom and 'restore again the glories of Israel.' His childhood and manhood were spent in the far-off and despised provincial village of Nazareth. There He grew 'in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' When at the appointed time He took up His public ministry, and came to the busy, crowded capital city Jerusalem, though His days might be spent there in the Temple or the mart, yet His home was in the tiny hamlet on the slopes of Olivet; there His tenderest human affections found their resting-place. We see how deeply He enjoyed the comfort of loving, trustful,

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companionship in the story of his affection for Lazarus and Mary. Troubled when, far away across the Jordan, He heard of His friend's illness, His tender heart was broken when He reached the spot which recalled all the past hours of sympathy and love. Though He knew all things, yet He wept at the grave. He was a perfect man in all His ways, and as such I think must have loved Bethany for its own sake, and also from its resemblance to His boyhood's home at Nazareth, for the home of childhood has ever had a great influence with mankind.

Bethany, unlike most of the Judæan villages, is situated on the *slope* of a hill, not at the top, and is exposed to the southern sun. Sheltered on the west and north, it lies in a cup-like hollow. From the summit of the hills, like Nazareth, it commands extensive views, and, like Nazareth, it has pure country close at hand. Its position is unique in one respect, that, although so sequestered, it is so near Jerusalem. Indeed, in a brisk walk of half an hour from St. Stephen's Gate you quit the noise, the busy life of a great Eastern town, and pass quite into the repose of the country. Then, too, close at hand are the desert hills east and north. We know how glad our Lord was to go into a mountain to pray, and, in communion alone with 'His Father,' gather renewed strength for the work.

These desert hills, so close to Bethany, stretch

far away till they end in the Jordan Plain; and they must always have been 'desert,' untouched by hand of man, uninhabited save by gazelle or goat. That wild wilderness, to which His type, the scapegoat, was led out, bearing the sins of the nation, must often have been trodden by Him when He made His temporary home at Bethany. Jewish history tells us that in that desert was the cliff down which the scapegoat was thrust headlong by its attendant, because that at one time the chosen victim returned to Jerusalem, causing a panic to the priests. They saw in its return an omen that the sins of the nation had returned unatoned, unforgiven, and that their own sins were still resting on their own heads. Did our Lord ever visit that desert cliff? I think He did. He fulfilled to the letter every type, and with His human eyes must have tracked the path of that scapegoat.

Let me try to describe Bethany as it appeared to me one day, when in the company of a dear friend who has now left this earth to be with Him he loved and honoured. We had walked up the steep ascent of Olivet, and, as we took a footpath leading east, deep worn in the rocky limestone by the feet of ages—a short cut over the shoulder of Olivet from the village to the main road below—we talked of our Lord's life and work. Said my friend: 'Here on this worn pathway we can at least feel assured we are walking the same path our Lord must often have

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trod.' We were charmed by the wild flowers growing all around ; and as we crossed the ridge, Bethany lay below, near enough for us to see every house, and yet far enough off to lose the noise of its inhabitants. Often after the labours of the day must He have crossed that ridge, as He in the evening 'went out of the city into Bethany.' The sun was sinking in the west as we sat down in the foreground of flowers and grass ; a broad, cool shadow was flung from one of the spurs of Olivet : part of the olive, fig, and pomegranate plantations lay also in the shade—no palm tree now waves over that hill-side. The one fragment of antiquity which Bethany possesses (a ruined tower, with its bevelled stones marking its Herodian if not pre-Herodian age) showed darkly ; a part of the village was in light, some large stones appearing amongst the small huts. A small wely, or mosque, with whitewashed walls and dome, gave contrast to the dark of the tower. Straight columns of blue smoke rose upward from the houses, for the evening meal was being prepared.

Beyond the village we could see a bit of the winding road to the Jordan Fords. The tops of the middle distant hills glowed in amber light, with blue shadows from their crags. On the right was a village, Abou Dis, by some thought to be the Bethphage of the Gospel, now the abode of the Bedouin who are selected by the Government to safeguard travellers to the Jordan.

Away farther to the right were the Hills of Engedi—bare, lifeless ; to the left the Wilderness of Judæa ; and, still in front, looking over the village, away, away in all the loveliest tints an artist could ever dream of, stretched the long line of the Mountains of Moab—rose, pink, vermillion, amber, all tender with shadows sharp and clear, showing, as it were, the very anatomy of the range, and yet so delicate that colour failed to represent it. A sweeping cast shadow, flung half down this cliff-like side, lost itself at the base in blue mist rising from the Dead Sea, which, deep below, was ultramarine. Such was the view one took in at a glance. Turning northwards, those barren and wild hills were in the full blaze of the setting sun. Surely our Lord must often have looked on Bethany at times like this ; and He who knew that all came from His Father's hand must have loved it for its own sake also, when He taught men to 'consider the lilies,' and pointed to their glorious beauty. He could not have been blind to the pure enjoyment of a scene like this. 'O my God, how fair must be Thy real world, if even Thy phantoms are so lovely !'

From the higher ridges close by you get still more extensive views. Eastward, portions of the Dead Sea, the whole range of Moab, the Plain of Jordan, Bethpeor, Gilead, Pisgah, and Mount Nebo all in view ; westward, at times the gleam, faint white, of the Great Sea ; north-west, Ramah, the birthplace of

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Samuel, Mizpeh, the hills above Bethel; while south, the mountains above Bethlehem, Jebel Ferudis, the Little Paradise of Herod.

What memories crowd the mind as these names pass through it! and yet some writers say there is nothing to see at Bethany. They go, as a rule, by the main road, taken by their dragoman to see the Tomb of Lazarus. Amid a mob of beggars they dismount, and with candle in hand descend some winding steps cut out of the rock to a chamber about twelve feet square, and still lower to a vault which would hold three or four bodies; then they ascend again, to find a motley crowd of beggars, lepers, hucksters of relics, and chattering fellahin. When I have witnessed this and the bargaining for relics of Bethany, I have rejoiced to think that this never could be the place where, with His disciples and mourners standing about, our Lord gave utterance to those thrilling words, 'Lazarus, come forth!' I do not know what this vault may have been; but it is *inside* the village even now, and Lazarus's tomb was not *inside* the village—it was *outside*, and, the text would seem to imply, near the main or Jericho road. Martha had heard of His approach, and 'went and met Him'; Mary on being told went also, and we are expressly told, 'Now Jesus was not yet come *into the town*, but was in that place where Martha met Him' (John xi. 30).

There are some old rock-cut tombs near the main road, and near the village too, unvisited, and for the most part unknown, easily reached by a little footway at the side of the village, where I prefer to think the Jews and disciples stood about weeping. There is space enough there for many spectators; and the openings of these tombs would naturally be closed by stones, so that the command to '*roll* away the stone' would have a real meaning. Had that vault been the place, setting aside all the other conditions, the command would have been, 'Lift up the stone.' Easterns do not bury their dead in pits, as with us; and most of the old tombs in Palestine are at the sides of cliffs.

When people say there is nothing to see at Bethany, what do they expect to find? There was no temple or palace for the high priest there. I believe, however, that at the time of Christ the Mount of Olives had Roman villas on its slope facing Jerusalem—for it was then, so to speak, the park of Jerusalem—and that Roman villas then existed is proved, I think, by the fact that all over those slopes I have picked up fragments of Roman pavements. The bits of coloured mosaic are turned up as the Arab passes his plough over the fields. But with all my search I was never able to find any of these fragments at Bethany. Roman coins, too, worn and defaced, I have also frequently found on that slope of the Mount of Olives.

Now at Bethany there was a modest home, with

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loving friends; there too was the house of Simon the leper, where Jesus sat at meat; and from this village our Lord set out to be received with that triumphal procession, when the song burst forth, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' He would probably leave Bethany by the short footpath of which I have before spoken, and so gain the main road, for the other roads over Olivet are not 'roads,' only narrow trackways, and not at all suited for a multitude. Those who went out from Jerusalem, hearing that He was coming, would meet Him. The two processions joined. The very words of the cry seem always to me to point to this. They cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' The road from Bethany to Jerusalem ascends somewhat the shoulder of the Mount of Olives; but that shoulder hides all view of Jerusalem except Zion, the city of David. It was this that gave a special meaning, a motive, to the cry. The road must always have been there, for there is a limestone precipice on its left hand, and a steep slope of Olivet on its right hand.

'The pathways of Thy land are little changed
Since Thou wert there;
The busy world through other ways has ranged,
And left these bare.
The rocky path still climbs the flowing steep
Of Olivet.
The rains of two millenniums wear it deep:
Men tread it yet.'

The first view I speak of must, I think, be clearly meant by St. Luke xix. 37: 'And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice.' They saw this view of Zion opening upon them, and it gave a point to their cry: 'Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord!' (Mark xi. 10). Those who 'went before' and 'they that followed,' all saw this view—and then comes a pause in the cry. Why is this? After passing the shoulder, the road dips; Zion is lost to view, and not till the road mounts again does the full, complete view burst upon you. See what Luke says (xix. 41): 'And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it.' Yes. There for a space the road runs straight on a rocky ledge. There deep below is the Kedron Valley, but, across that valley, the whole beautiful city. The joyous crowd, who thought He was going to an earthly throne, could not see the vision of those terrible days, 'when thine enemies should compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee.' I have walked that road again and again, and become more and more impressed with the thought that this was the way that memorable procession approached the sacred city.

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I came to these conclusions after my first visit to Jerusalem in 1872. Soon after my return I had the honour of making acquaintance with Dean Stanley. I showed him the drawings I had made on the spot, which much pleased him, for I found that he held the same views, and had published them in *Sinai and Palestine*. We had long talks on this and many other doubtful points in the Bible narrative. I have gone over the whole subject again in later visits: the result of my observations is presented here. I feel I cannot do better than add Dean Stanley's magnificent description of the road and view.

‘ Three pathways lead, and probably always led, . . . from Bethany to Jerusalem—one, a long circuit over the northern shoulder of Mount Olivet, down the valley which parts it from Scopus; another, a steep footpath over the summit; the third, the natural continuation of the road by which mounted travellers always approach the city from Jericho, over the southern shoulder, between the summit which contains the tombs of the prophets and that called the “ Mount of Offence.” There can be no doubt that this last is the road of the entry of Christ—not only because, as just stated, it is, and must always have been, the usual approach for horsemen and for large caravans, . . . such as then were concerned, but also because this is the only one of the three approaches which meets the requirements of the narrative which follows.



THE ROAD TO BETHANY FROM JERUSALEM.

Bethany

‘Two vast streams of people met on that day. The one poured out from the city, and as they came through the gardens, whose clusters of palm rose on the southern corner of Olivet, they cut down the long branches, as was their wont at the Feast of Tabernacles, and moved upwards towards Bethany, with loud shouts of welcome. From Bethany streamed forth the crowds who had assembled there on the previous night, and who came testifying of the great event at the sepulchre of Lazarus. The road soon loses sight of Bethany. It is now a rough, but still broad and well-defined mountain track, winding over rock and loose stones; a steep declivity below on the left; the sloping shoulder of Olivet above on the right; fig trees below and above, here and there, growing out of the rocky soil. . . . Along the road the multitude threw down the boughs severed from the olive trees through which they were forcing their way, or spread out a rude matting formed of the palm branches which they had already cut as they came out. The larger portion—those perhaps who escorted Him from Bethany—unwrapped their loose cloaks from their shoulders, and stretched them along the rough path, to form a momentary carpet as He approached. The two streams met midway; half of the vast mass, turning round, preceded; the other half followed. Bethany is hardly left in the rear before the long procession must have swept up and over the ridge where first begins “the

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descent of the Mount of Olives" towards Jerusalem. At this point the first view is caught of the south-eastern corner of the city. The Temple and the more northern portions are hid by the slope of Olivet on the right. What is seen is only Mount Zion, now for the most part a rough field, crowned with the Mosque of Omar, and the angle of the western walls; but then covered with houses to its base, . . . surmounted by the castle of Herod, on the supposed site of the palace of David, from which that portion of Jerusalem emphatically "the City of David" derived its name. It was at this precise point, "as He drew near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives"—may it not have been from the sight thus opening upon them?—that the hymn of triumph, the earliest hymn of Christian devotion, burst forth from the multitude—"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the kingdom that cometh of our father *David*. Hosanna . . . peace . . . glory in the highest!" There was a pause as the shout rang through the long defile; and, as the Pharisees who stood by in the crowd complained, He pointed to the "stones" which, strewn beneath their feet, would immediately "cry out" if "these were to hold their peace."

' Again the procession advanced. The road descends a slight declivity, and the glimpse of the city is again withdrawn behind the intervening ridge of Olivet; a

few moments, and the path mounts again ; it climbs a rugged ascent—it reaches a ledge of smooth rock, and in an instant the whole city bursts into view. As now the dome of the Mosque of El Aksa rises like a ghost from the earth before the traveller stands on the ledge, so then must have risen the Temple tower ; as now the vast inclosure of the Mussulman sanctuary, so then must have spread the Temple courts ; as now the grey town on its broken hills, so then the magnificent city, with its background—long since vanished away—of gardens and suburbs on the western plateau behind. Immediately below was the Valley of the Kedron, here seen in its greatest depth as it joins the Valley of Hinnom, and thus giving full effect to the great peculiarity of Jerusalem seen only on its eastern side—its situation as of a city rising out of a deep abyss. It is hardly possible to doubt that this rise and turn of the road, this rocky ledge, was the exact point where the multitude paused again, and—“ He, when He beheld the city, wept over it.”

‘ Nowhere else on the Mount of Olives is there a view like this. . . . This is the only road by which a large procession could have come ; and this, almost the only spot of the Mount of Olives which the Gospel narrative fixes with exact certainty, is almost the only unmarked spot—undefiled or unhallowed by mosque or church, chapel or tower—left to speak for itself, that here the Lord stayed His onward march ; and here

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His eyes beheld what is still the most impressive view which the neighbourhood of Jerusalem furnishes, and the tears rushed forth at the sight of this scene, which, with the one exception of the conversation at the Well of Jacob, stands alone in the Gospel history for the vividness and precision of its localisation.'

It was a wonderful sight to see on this very road, at this very place, the procession of Christian pilgrims returning from bathing in the Jordan, chanting hymns of praise, carrying crowns of the *nubback*, or thorn tree, of the traditional tree from which it is said the crown of thorns was made, and crosses of Jordan reeds held aloft. The story then gained in vividness; but when I saw the Moslem procession going to the Tomb of Moses (Neby Mousa), with its greater numbers, its wild excitement—the lower slopes of Olivet thickly dotted with groups of women and children in their gayest dresses, and heard their shrill cries of joy, the sounds of trumpet and pipe—then the brilliant colours, the mass of moving figures, in places obscured by clouds of dust, all enabled one to somewhat realise what that procession going from Jerusalem to meet our Lord must have been. The stream of figures was so greatly prolonged that the end of the procession had not left St. Stephen's Gate when the head was passing the shoulder of Olivet.

Think, moreover, of that last journey with the disciples, when, having 'opened their understanding,

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that they might understand the Scriptures,' 'He led them out as far as Bethany,' to some of those secluded hills. The little band of disciples went with Him there to be blessed, and there, 'parted from them, He was carried into heaven.'

I have seen Bethany at all hours of day and night: in the full blaze of Eastern midday, blinding in its white heat, or in the silent hours under the pale light of stars, or in the wild turmoil of storm, snow and hail, thunder and lightning; but I have ever felt it to be one of the most hallowed spots on earth—a place to be studied with care; for, as we love to look on scenes those our dearest on earth were glad to see, so ought we to love to understand and trace the outlines of the place so loved by Him, and where His foot last pressed this earth.

Peasants go home at evening up the pathway of the hill to Bethany:

'Man has not changed them in that slumbering land,
Nor time effaced;
Where Thy feet trod to bless, we still may stand—
All can be traced.'

VI

BETHLEHEM

‘LET us go even unto Bethlehem,’ said the shepherds; and though He whom they found is no longer there, but ‘risen,’ perhaps we may learn some lesson by a walk to that place. From Jerusalem to Bethlehem I always *walked*, for one of those things which at first strikes the stranger is the smallness of the Holy Land, and the close vicinity in which so many of the sacred sites lie. Passing by the Jaffa Gate, and then the dry tanks or reservoirs of Gihon, and leaving on the right hand the houses and the windmill built by the late Sir Moses Montefiore, you ere long reach the Plain of Rephaim, the so-called ‘Camp of the Assyrians.’ An ill-made road—like all Palestine roads—straggles over this plain; pleasant hills lie on the left hand. The country looks fertile, but we are thinking more of the feet which trod this way in the ages past. You climb a rocky part of the road, and then from near the Convent of Elias a view of Bethlehem stands full before you. Let us sit down and quietly study the scene, for

more may be learned by noting a few facts than by hurrying all over the land.

I often felt that seeing in their present every-day life the places read of from childhood took away somewhat from the sanctity of their idea in one's mind. The present, so real, so palpable oftentimes destroys the ideal, and the halo vanishes which imagination has thrown round names ; but the land can still teach us a great deal, if we give up the desire to settle to a hair's-breadth where this or that recorded event took place, and content ourselves with the thought that somewhere near the great Drama was acted. My sketch must explain the general aspect of the place, as I do not propose to give a detailed account of villages or convents which now crown the hills of Bethlehem. There lie the hills on which David the ruddy shepherd boy wandered with his father's sheep, over which David the hunted fugitive fled.

My mind was very early led to think of the inn ; and—I say it with all humility—I do not think that the traditions of the early fathers and Jerome, which place the 'manger' in a cave, are entitled to credit. Justin Martyr says our Lord's birth took place 'in a certain cave very close to the village.' Did the notion of a 'cave' come from the early adulteration of truth which Egyptian notions of the sanctity of caves tacked on to Christianity? We know such a belief existed long before Christ in the Nile Valley. Hermits there had

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borrowed from Buddhists, who in caves, ages before, had sought to work out their idea of perfection. Monks and their abodes had existed in heathen lands long before Christian monks adopted some of the early errors. Even the shaving of the head, the tonsure, was a custom of Egyptian priests, and St. Athanasius forbade his monks to adopt the heathen rite. Caves are frequently mentioned in Old Testament Writ, it is true, as places of retreat, for the burial of the dead, or for refuge—the cave of Adullam, of Machpelah, Elijah's cave in Horeb, our Lord's tomb, and in other instances; but where in Holy Writ is it said that our Lord was born in a cave? Yet now they show you a *subterranean vault*! I do not care to describe the superstitious rites and ceremonies which here take place.

Let us closely examine the text. The inn of Bethlehem was the place to which Joseph and Mary directed their steps when the decree for Jews to be taxed with the rest of the world led them from their home at Nazareth. According to the Jewish law, natives of a place had to go to their original home to pay the poll-tax, and so the scattered Bethlehemites gathered in such numbers that the inn was overflowing. Joseph and Mary were probably late in arriving, for they would have to travel slowly; and in that little village, 'one of the least in the kingdom of Judah,' you would not expect to find a building occupying a large

space of ground, such as is represented in most pictures of Palestine inns or khans.

I have studied with care the ruins of khans still existing. Those ruins are probably Saracenic, but built on the foundations of the older resting-places. From the facts I have observed, and from considerations of the climate of Palestine, I incline to the



AN EASTERN INN OR KHAN.

conclusion that the representations so familiar in pictorial Bibles of open courtyards are wrong. I am led to think the old buildings were something of this sort: a building roofed in, entered by large doors—the floor, or area, the place where goods were piled or where cooking was done; at the sides, manglers or stables for horse or ass; these manglers divided by stone or wooden partitions; *over* these a floor, which

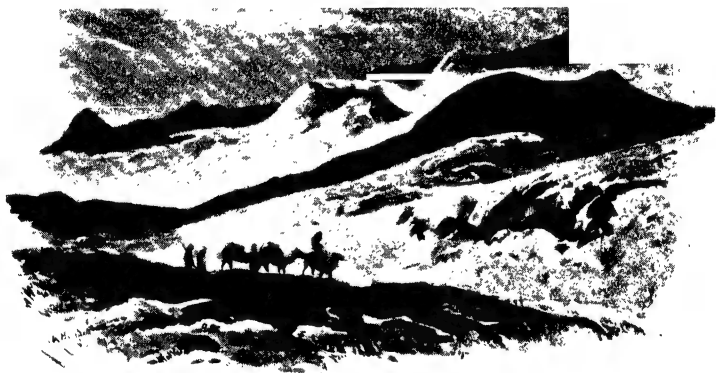
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was reached by steps of stone or wood. This floor was divided into apartments or rooms by wooden beams or hangings of carpet or matting; these apartments, upper chambers, rooms—call them what you like—were the sleeping apartments of the persons who had obtained a stable or manger for their animals immediately below. So, being late, Joseph and Mary found no room, and from the pressure of people had to rest themselves in that stable below. The sketch I give of an existing khan will, I think, help to make my idea clear. Remember, also, the shepherds go straight to the inn; the people crowded in it would all know of the birth of a babe. There is no necessity to hunt about in a cave, as suggested by various writers. St. Matthew (ii. 11) says expressly: ‘they were come into the *house* where the young child was.’ Dean Stanley makes a very important statement with reference to the reputed cave:

‘One further objection to the identity of the whole scene must be mentioned in conclusion. During the troubled period of the invasion of Ibrahim Pasha, the Arab population of Bethlehem took possession of the convent, and dismantled the whole of the recess of that gilding and marble which is the bane of so many sanctuaries, European and Asiatic. The native rock of the cave was disclosed, but also, it is said, an ancient sepulchre hewn in that very spot. It is possible, but very improbable, that a rock devoted to sepulchral

purposes would have been employed by Jews, whose scruples on this subject are too well known to need comment, either as an inn or a stable.'

I think we ought not to be surprised at the few Jewish ruins found in Palestine. It is too often overlooked that the Jews were a people living, many of them, in tents. Even after Solomon had built the



THE DRY SOUTHERN HILLS OF JUDAH.

Temple we find the cry, 'To your tents, O Israel!' which cry was repeated much later on. The reference to tents is frequent, and not limited to times of war or festivity. The place apart which fenced cities held is also to be noticed. The capital towns of Jerusalem and Samaria, and some frontier towns, were strongholds, but I think the evidence proves that the majority of the people lived in open villages. Even in the

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days of restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah, the great boon craved of the mighty kings Cyrus and Artaxerxes was to be allowed to rebuild 'the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres' (Neh. ii. 3).

Can we trace who built the inn, or who at least founded an inn, at Bethlehem? I think we can very clearly, from Holy Writ. David inherited, through his father Jesse, the patrimony at Bethlehem. What did he do with it? I believe he gave it away. Let us look closely at the matter: when David fled from Absalom he went to Mahanaim, and was met by Barzillai the Gileadite (2 Sam. xvii. 27). This tribe had given leaders and prophets in the past days of foreign invasion or home decadence of religion; Jephthah, the leader, and Elijah, the prophet full of holy zeal, were natives of Gilead, to say nothing of David's personal followers. This man, this chief of a clan, brings gifts of various kinds for the fugitive king and his followers. David is much touched by his kindness in his sore need, and we read that after the victory and the death of Absalom, when David sets out to return home, Barzillai comes down to conduct David over Jordan. He is an old man, fourscore, so that when the king wishes him to go with himself to Jerusalem, he declines on the plea of old age, but begs that his servant or son, Chimham, might be accepted in his stead, and receive in his person the rewards and honours David had intended for the old chief. We



BETHLEHEM.

'What sudden blaze of song
Spreads o'er th' expanse of heaven?
In waves of light it thrills along,
Th' angelic signal given—
"Glory to God!" from yonder central
fire
Flows out the echoing lay beyond
the starry quire.'

The Christian Year.

read that Chimham went with David ; and he was evidently held in great esteem, for on the king's death-bed he especially charges Solomon 'to show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai.' They were to eat at his table, because of their kindness to David when he fled. In Jer. xli. 17 we carry the matter farther. We read that Chimham's habitation was at Bethlehem ; now this habitation was a khan, a guest-house, an inn. The hospitality in Barzillai's nature had descended to his sons. He succours David ; David probably gives his own patrimony in grateful remembrance. Chimham builds a resting-place at Bethlehem ; the grand virtue descends. This inn survives the wreck of thrones, the desolation of invaders. We read that the people who had been left in the land after the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar rose in revolt, slew Gedaliah, and, after committing various excesses, seized Jeremiah. When Johanan pursued and defeated them, and the revolvers were crushed, the pursuing columns halted at Chimham's habitation, or inn, at Bethlehem. Thence they passed into Egypt, being afraid to return, and we hear of them no more in Holy Writ. So I read the story.

Did any of the 'children of Bethlehem' come back from the captivity? Yes ; an 'hundred twenty and three' (Ezra ii. 21). Under Nehemiah 'Bethlehem and Netophah' are classed together, and the returning captives are 'an hundred fourscore and eight'

Bethlehem

(Neh. vii. 26) ; and we see further, for in Neh. vii. 63, 'the children of Barzillai, which took one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife,' are especially mentioned as returning. Moreover, owing to the reforming zeal of Nehemiah and the elders, their descendants were especially forbidden to act as priests, because they were polluted, their genealogy not being purely Jewish, according to the law of Moses. They, like one of the sons of the high priest, were driven out of the priesthood (Neh. xiii. 28), the Tirshatha, or governor, decreeing that they were not to eat of the holy things, 'till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim' (Neh. vii. 65). Does this puzzling sentence at all foreshadow their exclusion till such time as the true Light (Urim), the true Perfection (Thummim), Christ, should appear, and destroy the barrier which separated the Jew from the Gentile? This zeal which Nehemiah and the Tirshatha had for pure-blooded Jews led their descendants, as we know, into terrible errors. While they were thinking that none but the sons of Abraham could be saved, not seeing that 'God, even of these stones,' could raise up children to Himself, the habitation of the despised, excommunicated children of Barzillai was to have greater honour than any other in this world, for there the gentle Virgin brings forth her firstborn son, Jesus, the Saviour of mankind.

The country around Bethlehem is very fertile, and

we can understand why it was called the House of Bread, for the corn lands show in greater breadth than usual, and in the Wady Urtass close by can be seen the truly wonderful gardens Mr. Meshullam made—gardens where shrub and plant, flower and vegetable, grow with such astonishing luxuriance that it is hard even to believe one's eyes ; but what you see enables you to credit statements which otherwise would seem to be exaggerated as to the fertility of the place. You hear of mustard plants in bushes six feet high ; roots of great size, potatoes and turnips, cabbage, all show how a valley, some years ago barren, may by careful cultivation, and above all by irrigation, 'blossom like the rose,' and prove that the soil of Palestine will still produce the hundredfold. These were probably the gardens of Solomon, so famous in old time, and then, through invasions and neglect, becoming desolate for so long. The grapes, too, ought not to be forgotten. They are a very marvel for size. Surely King David well knew this ground. Did he write the twenty-third Psalm in remembrance of it? 'The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : He leadeth me beside the still waters.'

The inhabitants of Bethlehem are chiefly members of the Greek or Roman Catholic Churches. The women are particularly handsome, and to one who had spent some months in Egypt the unveiled face was a great

delight. Their beauty is quite of the Western type, owing, it is said, to the fact that the Crusaders had strong garrisons at Bethlehem, and intermarriages were frequent. A large trade is done in carvings on mother-of-pearl, and rosaries are made in quantities for the faithful.

The tradition of ages has associated the name of Solomon with those huge 'pools' which lie two or three miles south-west from Bethlehem. The country around is rocky; the roads are rude; the hills show old terraces, once covered with vines; scattered ruins of old villages, telling of past cultivation, are common; and there, cut out of the living rock, are these pools. They stand so lonely and so grand in their size and construction that the mind is filled with wonder, and easily understands that, rightly or wrongly, tradition almost necessarily attributes them to the greatest king who ruled Judæa.

The pools are three in number. They lie one above the other, at a height of 2,600 feet above sea-level, and are so planned that the *floor* of the top one is higher than the water-level of the next. They occupy an immense space of ground, being quite the third of a mile in length. The top, or upper pool, is 380 feet long, 236 feet broad, and 25 feet deep; the middle pool, 423 feet long, 250 feet broad at its broadest end, the east, and 39 feet in depth. The largest pool is also the lowest, and is 582 feet long, 207 feet broad

at its broadest end, the west, and has a depth of 50 feet. These pools are lined with cement, and show in many places traces of repair. Steps lead down to the water at the corners and the middles.

The supply of water comes from springs. One flows through a channel into the upper pool. The water issues from a narrow cleft in the rock. This passage was explored years ago, on one occasion when the stream was low. Another is fed by a stream which issues through four pipes of earthenware about ten inches in diameter. It is said that water bubbles up in the centre of the remaining one. The sides are coated with cement, but this cement only covers the natural rock. The abutments and some portions of the sides are built of stones of considerable size. An aqueduct also brings water from a spring some little distance away. Over the mouth of this spring is a small building in which is a door, so that this spring could be shut off from the pool, if there was any danger, from whatever cause, of the spring being fouled. A great aqueduct runs under these pools, and runs underground to Jerusalem. This aqueduct in some places is made of masonry, and is often cut through the living rock. It fed the Temple with water.

Major Conder and Mr. Drake thought from the workmanship that these pools were Roman, made by Pontius Pilate with money taken from the Temple treasury, as related by Josephus. But Josephus speaks

Bethlehem

of only one aqueduct. If the Romans had really executed these gigantic works, Josephus, who in all he wrote wished to glorify them, would have been more precise in his account. The Jews and nations of antiquity were very skilful in water storage and aqueducts. The construction of the aqueduct leading from the pools also exhibits great scientific knowledge. Air holes and air chambers are frequent, in order to take off pressure, and also by admitting air to force the water through the pipe. The remains not only in Judæa, but in Moab, show how thoroughly these old nations understood that great principle of hydraulics, that water will rise to its level. Now the Romans do not seem to have known this, for when they wished to carry water from hill to hill, they did it by arches built on arches. This aqueduct or conduit is never raised on arches, and it sometimes even ascends hills : but then those hills are on a lower level than the springs. Romans may have repaired the works ; I cannot think they originated them. The Romans seem often to have imitated that great Pharaoh, Rameses II., who when he had ascended the throne, and found any great work existing, coolly cut out the name of the founder and *put in his own*.



THE NORTHERN END OF THE DEAD SEA.

VII

THE DEAD SEA

TO modern travellers there is great fascination in the Dead Sea, and the old-world travellers had much to say about it. Its remarkable position, its great depression, its barren shores amidst so much tropical luxuriance, attracted attention as one of Nature's marvels. Then the monkish traditions grew up, that it covered the sites of the guilty cities of the plain. Having spent some time on its shores, and painted it under every variety of effect and from many points of view, my mind has been much exercised as to its possible origin, and whether it had anything to do with that terrible judgment of the cities.

Let us first examine what many writers have to say about it. They always assert in the most positive manner that the Dead or Salt Sea covers what was once the fertile valley in which stood the five 'cities of the plain.' Four, they assert, were destroyed, but Zoar was preserved at the intercession of Lot. They go on to say that not a ripple or a wave disturbs its surface,

The Dead Sea

that not a bird builds its nest within the precincts of this 'doleful region.'

Chateaubriand says: 'The smallest bird of heaven would not find among these rocks a blade of grass for its sustenance; everything here announces the country of a reprobate people, and seems to breathe the horror and incest whence sprang Ammon and Moab.' Lamar-tine says: 'The surface of this sea everywhere presents the same aspect: it is transparent, it glitters, it is dead; motion and noise are no more; its waves, too heavy for the wind, are still, and no white foam plays on the pebbles of its shores. It is a sea of petrification.'

Chateaubriand further says: 'Several travellers, and amongst others Troilo and D'Arvieux, assert that they remarked fragments of walls and palaces in the Dead Sea.' Did they get this notion from Strabo, who gives a circumference of sixty *stadia* (about seven miles) to the ruins of Sodom? Maundrell says he 'diligently surveyed the waters, but could not see any heaps of ruins nor any smoke ascending above the surface of the waters, as is usually described in the writings and maps of geographers.' But he adds that the Father Guardian and the Procurator of Jerusalem, both men of years, and seemingly not destitute either of sense or probity, assert that they had actually seen one of these ruins—that it was so near the shore, and the waters so shallow at that time, that they, together with some Frenchmen, went to it, and found there several pillars and other fragments

of buildings.' He quaintly adds: 'The cause of our being deprived of this sight was, I suppose, the height of the water.'

Clerical writers mostly say this: 'If we believe the Bible record, that bituminous lake does positively cover the once fertile vale of Siddim, and the site of Sodom and Gomorrah'; and, as a further argument, some have pleaded: 'The ruins of ancient Thebes are still to be seen on the banks of the Nile, and the pyramids of Egypt outlived the havoc of ages: why should not the fragments of the guilty cities be preserved in the bed of the Dead Sea?' Even those who have felt the beauty of the scene have written: 'It was a lovely picture to gaze upon; but how awful in the associations connected with it! One could not but look upwards at the placid and clear blue sky, and think of the dread moment when "the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire." The Divine fury has subsided. The liquid monument of it remains.'

Thus good books have been written by good men to point a moral. The world accepts as a 'Bible truth' the belief of the poet as to—

'That bituminous lake where Sodom flamed;'

but many other things have been accepted from Milton and passed as 'Bible truth' which had as little foundation.

Enough of these extracts. Let me briefly place before the reader the facts which I noted in the land. I had

The Dead Sea

expected to see a gloomily awful, tarn-like lake, its waters reflecting the gloom of the hills above. I first saw the Dead Sea from a hill in Wady Kelt. It was a wild day—cloud upon cloud piled high in air ; great cumulus thunder-stacks rolling over the Moab hills ; while ever and again came sweeping storms of rain, passing over portions of the mountains. Hill behind hill stretched away in gloom that faded into purest tones of ultramarine in the far, far-off distance towards the Wady Arabah. The sea lay deep down, a lovely blue-green of purest tones, while the foreground hill on which I stood was in a blaze of sunlight. Then what did I see when first I gained its shores ? It had been a wild night of thunder and rain. The morning was fine—a bright blue sky, with cirrus clouds, hung over the sea. There was a brisk wind, so high I had to lash my easel ; there were white crests to the waves, and white surf was beating on the shore. I had hoped to see reflections in the water. There were none *that* day. The scene was quite lovely : the near hills of Moab, in pure tones of red and yellow, with their shadows sharp and clear. In the middle distance were warm purples, and far away, tender grey and blue, till all forms were lost in haze towards the southern end—that in the direction of Wady Arabah. The shores are barren and dreary—raised beaches, showing different levels of water, each beach with its wreck of drift-wood, bleached white by salt and sun ; relics of trees brought down from Jordan and

The Dead Sea

Arnon, with quantities of small shells of dead shellfish—there were not any living. Flocks of birds were skimming in rapid flight backwards and forwards over the water. The salt evaporation was so great that my moustache got quite frosted with salt—quite like the frosted ice which forms from our breath when the cold weather is with us.

I saw the sea often, and once under terrible effects of gloom. The Bedouin told me that sometimes it was quite like smoke from a fire. But I have seen in England, when a hot sun came out after a night of hoar-frost, that the mist went up from the fields and from the hills like pure smoke from a fire—lovely, but nothing terrible, did I ever see in the haze.

The approach to the Dead Sea is peculiar—over a mud-coloured plain: mud hardened or crusted by the sun, glittering with salt crystals; whitened patches of salt on the surface also; the crust so thin that horse or man sinks in foot-deep, and then the liquid, bituminous mud oozes back into the footprint. The vegetation is scanty; but there was a lovely pink flower, much like Scotch heather, growing about in quantities, of which I gathered bunches; it shook to bits in my hand as I walked; it seemed dried up.

When showing my pictures and sketches at home, I have often been met with the remark by eminent ministers of the Church: 'How beautiful to look at, and yet to think what an awful scene that covers!' I

The Dead Sea

do not think there is the least Biblical foundation for the view ; and I will briefly give my reasons for believing that the 'sea' existed long before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that the fate of those cities had nothing to do with its existence.

Let us take first the separation of Abram and Lot. In Gen. xiii. 3-5 we read that Abram in his journey came to Bethel, where his tent had been at the beginning. Lot was now with him. The spot is closely described in the chapter preceding (verses 7 and 8). 'Bethel was on the west, Hai on the east.' This hill was called 'the place of the altar.' We know how Abram and Lot agreed to separate, and how (xiii. 10) 'Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan. . . . He chose him all the plain of Jordan.' Lot *chose* ; he did not let God choose—hence his trouble.

Now what can be seen of the Jordan valley from the hills about Bethel? I stayed there some time, camped near the ruined tank or reservoir. My mind was set upon trying to find the view spoken of in the Bible. I ascended one steep hill—a hill I had thought from careful examination would command the Jordan Plain eastwards—but found on reaching the summit that a ridge I had not seen shut out the plain ; only the Moab hills could be seen. I tried another, with the same result. Hot and tired, I descended to where I saw an Arab minding some goats ; close by another Arab was ploughing. I asked if from any hill I could



THE JORDAN VALLEY AND THE DEAD SEA FROM THE HILL OVER AGAINST BETHEL.

see the Ghor and Bar-Lout. The Jordan valley is called the Ghor, and the Dead Sea called the Sea of Lot by the Arabs. The answer came : ' Yes, from the Hill of Stones '—pointing to a hill. I was struck by the answer ; the Bible calls the hill the Place of the Altar ; the Arab called the hill he pointed to the Hill of Stones. From that hill I got a fine view through a gap in the ridge which had before baffled me. The view I saw was the Jordan plain, the windings of the river, and where the river passed into the Dead Sea : of that sea about two or three miles, but only the *northern* end—the *Jordan* end. I could see the distant hills of Engedi, and over them to the south the far-off distances of Moab, but no distance *down* the face of the Moab hills, which I well knew were running into the Dead Sea, and not one bit of that sea at that end at all. The Engedi hills shut out the sea. When Abram and Lot saw the plain of Jordan, from the hill above Bethel, I think it follows that they saw much the same view I have described : they saw the *northern end*.

I have since discovered that the late Sir George Grove, Canon Tristram, Sir Charles Wilson, and Major Conder, members of the Palestine Exploration Fund, all agree in thinking the ' cities of the plain ' stood at the northern end of the sea. Captain Conder, speaking of Bethel and its neighbourhood, says : ' When Lot " lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan," it follows that those cities must have been

The Dead Sea

situated on some part of the plain north of the Dead Sea, and visible from the heights of Bethel.' He adds 'The *plain* or *circle* of Jordan could not have extended beyond the point where the river enters the Dead Sea'; and quotes the statement that Lot *journeyed east*, 'which would have led him far away from the southern end of the sea.' And, moreover, he notes that, had the cities stood at the *southern* end of the sea, there is no depression of the hills near Mamre which would enable the smoke to be seen; but if at the *northern end*, there is a dip in the range which would enable the smoke to show. Josephus says it was lightning. Fürst says Sodom means 'the walled'; Gomorrah, 'the town in the cleft'; Adonah, 'the strong place'; Zeboim, 'the town of the gazelles'; Zoar, 'the small.'

But we find the Dead Sea mentioned in the Bible *before* the destruction of the city (Gen. xiv. 3). The gathering of the kings is said to have taken place 'in the Vale of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea.' The Dead Sea is always spoken of in the Old Testament as the Salt Sea, or Sea of the Plain (Deut. iii. 17), the East Sea; and the Mediterranean is frequently spoken of as the Great Sea westwards.

When the angels told Abraham at Mamre of their mission to destroy the cities, he, after all his pleading, is left in doubt as to the fate of these places. Remember, at Mamre he is only a few miles away. His mind was doubtless full of anxiety as to their fate,

The Dead Sea

for 'early in the morning Abraham got up to the place where he stood before the Lord, and looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah' (Gen. xix. 27, 28). He had heard nothing, felt nothing to enlighten him as to the result of the Lord's visit to Sodom, so, full of anxious uncertainty, he climbs the hill and looks towards the land of the plain (verse 28). Now, again, what is it possible to see from the high ground at Hebron? Looking to the south, the eye stretches into a wilderness land of vast extent; but eastwards a high ridge intercepts any view of the Dead Sea—the hills of Moab are clear and distinct, but no Dead Sea. What does he see? The smoke of the country 'as the smoke of a furnace'—that is all he has to tell him of the fate of Sodom. Had there been any convulsion of a nature such as would be required to sink those cities into the waters of the Dead Sea, not Mamre only, but Palestine, would have been shaken to its centre. And why should the cities be sunk in water?—the Bible¹ only speaks of 'fire.'

Then, again, Lot asks to escape to a little city, Zoar—it is 'near'; and the request is granted. Zoar too was on the plain, for in xix. 30 we are told, after the destruction of the cities and Lot's escape, that he went up out of 'Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain.' We are

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 6. After describing the destruction of the 'old world' by water, the apostle contrasts it with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, 'turning the cities into *ashes*.'

The Dead Sea

told too (verse 15) that 'when morning arose' Lot and his wife and children are led out; and in the 23rd verse: 'The sun was *risen* upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar'; so the time given is between dawn and sunrise—certainly not exceeding two hours—and yet he is in a place of safety. Had there been any earthquake, Zoar would have felt the shock; no earthquake is spoken of. We have no warrant for implying one, and should keep close to the words of Holy Writ.

What, then, was this destruction caused by? 'Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and that which grew upon the ground' (verses 24 and 25). The cities had sinned—the cities had to be punished; they were 'cities of the plain.' I have before said, the whole region is bituminous; the cities were, like Eastern cities now, built of the soil of the plain and bitumen and bricks, such as the early builders of Babel used. 'They had brick for stone, and slime [bitumen] had they for mortar' (Gen. xi. 3). A striking resemblance exists between the plain of Jordan and the plain of Chaldea in this respect: all the great cities of Chaldea and Egypt were composed of such materials, and they have all utterly perished. The temples and palaces of Egypt remain, because they were built of stone. This bituminous clay was dried in brick form, sun-burnt; and 'the fire from heaven rained by God' was what the Arab of to-day calls lightning—truly

indeed a fire from God. 'All that grew upon the ground'—the corn, the grass—took fire, the very houses fed the flame. The remarkable expression—'the smoke of a furnace' (verse 28)—shows the burning of bituminous matter; and so I conclude that the destruction was by 'fire,' not water, and purely local.

God had worked His judgment by a miracle: 'fire fulfilling His word'; but there is no need, no warrant, to suppose that the Dead Sea covers the cities.

In far-off ages perhaps the Jordan found its way by the Wady Arabah to the Red Sea, long before historic times. The tiers of cliffs or terraces in the Jordan valley, the markings on the hills of Moab which descend into the Dead Sea, show that different water-levels have existed. Some great convulsion made that deep hole in the earth's crust; and whenever the Jordan flowed through to the Red Sea everything was at a very different level. The Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea have the same levels, but the Dead Sea is 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The Wady Arabah is also above the level of the Red and Dead Seas, and so the Jordan and Arnon, flowing into that deep hollow, had no escape, and became in early times—long before Abraham—'the salt sea' of Gen. xiv. 3. Vast beds of salt exist, and from earliest times a great trade was carried on it.

The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is consequently one of the deepest depressions on the earth's surface. It is only a short journey from Jerusalem, and if approached directly from the capital, which is 2,500 feet above sea-level, the change is startling. It has, moreover, been proved that this depression is prehistoric, the remains of a great inland sea. Probably its origin was volcanic. Active volcanoes must at one time have raged all around, as shown by the great lava beds of the Leja and the whole of Bashan.

The River Jordan runs into the north end of the Dead Sea, and not only the Jordan, but two other rivers run in. For the Jordan brings down the waters of the Zerka and the Jabbok, both mountain-fed streams, and subject to 'spate' and flood. All carry along *débris*, mud, silt, and torn-up trees, which are deposited on the banks of the sea, there to be withered by sun and wind, and covered by salt deposits.

Hard as the ground may look, it only has a crust that is really hard; this surface is covered with salt crystals, with cinder-looking stones, and lumps of bitumen. Walk or ride over it, and, as already noted, you find your feet sink in bitumen well up into the footprint. It would never surprise me to hear any day that great oil wells had been discovered there. Only the danger to health of living hereabout, and the inertness which prevails in the East, prevent this region being thoroughly explored.



THE JORDAN VALLEY FROM THE DEAD SEA.

The Dead Sea

There are great deposits of salt, especially at the southern end; and when a strong east wind blows you have salt showers all over the country, extending even to Jerusalem, destroying vegetable life, scorching it up, and dangerous to human life too. It was ever so. The Old Testament writers speak plainly of the dire effect of the east wind. Ezekiel (xvii. 10) says: 'When the east wind toucheth it, it shall wither.'

Vegetation there is none, except that in addition to a dried-up plant with purple flowers already described, but impossible to preserve or press, the vine, with long tendrils and large leaves, grows over the small mounds. The fruit of this vine resembles an apple or an unripe orange in size. Bitter and deadly to taste, it is the true Sodom apple, that fruit which the sons of the prophets so ignorantly put in the pot, crying out when they had tasted: 'O my father, there is death in the pot.'

This region is now showing some signs of life, for there is a road from Jerusalem to the very banks of Jordan, and you can ride in a carriage the whole way. Boats also are on the Dead Sea; they carry passengers and merchandise, and steam launches have been recently added.

Bitumen is still collected from the Dead Sea by the Arabs, and brought on camels to Jerusalem.

The Dead Sea

Sometimes the masses of bitumen are of considerable size.¹

I have frequently seen flocks of crackles flying over the surface of the sea.

The hills which bound the eastern shores of the sea are fine in form and colour, especially at sunset. Storms are frequent, and grand indeed is it to see the dark thunder-clouds roll over them, as the vivid lightning flashes down. I do not so much wonder at the terror of the old monks, and their connecting the sea with God's judgment on the cities. There is usually a haze over the southern end, for though the rivers spoken of enter the sea, none leave it; the water loses itself in salt marshes and evaporation.

Some years ago there was a wild scheme to make a Jordan Valley Canal, in opposition to the 'ditch,' or Suez Canal. Even the late General Gordon was infected by the idea. Company promoters were positive it could be done. Newspapers took the scheme up warmly, and would rarely publish any letters written in opposition to it. But those who knew the country pointed out the enormous difference of levels; and in the end an expedition was sent out by the promoters, Col. H. G. Colville in command, with other able officers. Then it was found that even if the level of

¹ Antigonus sent an army to chastise the Nabathæans for their refusal to allow him to collect bitumen from Lake Asphaltitus. Albufeda remarks that the inhabitants of places near the Dead Sea 'coated the trunks of their vines and palm trees with bitumen, believing it to be beneficial.'

the sea was raised above the tops of those hills shown in the picture upon page 123, it would not surmount the hills of the Arabah. And had the scheme been practicable, and could it have been duly executed, what would have become of Palestine? Only the tops of the highest hills would have appeared above the flood. The scheme was relinquished.



PETER'S HOUSE AT JOPPA.

VIII

THE STORY OF AN OASIS

THE oasis I am about to describe has an important place in Bible study. For more than forty years intelligent explorers were trying to discover it. We first read of it in Gen. xiv. 7, as En Mishpat (or Kadesh). When that old-world conqueror Chedor-laomer, King of Elam—a region below Babylon—made his great march of over twelve hundred miles, sweeping away all his foes, he evidently halted to rest his army at Kadesh.

Many, many years passed away, and again it was visited by a huge array. For the Israelites, after their escape from Egypt, and after their sojourn at the sacred mount of Sinai, proceeded on their way to the Promised Land, and they too halted at Kadesh. It was the spot from which they sent out spies.

An oasis is a place where water exists. Water in an Eastern land is the all-needed blessing. We Westerns have so many streams, rivers, brooks, lakes, and ponds, that very rarely do we suffer from the want of water; but in deserts it is not so, you travel for



AN OASIS IN THE DESERT.

The Story of an Oasis

days without finding any. Now deserts are not flat, but composed generally of ridges of barren hills with winding ravines, or wadies, as they are termed—valleys which twist in and out among the barren ranges, like a maze or network of passes. An oasis is usually most difficult for a stranger to find: there is nothing to guide you, no road, no track, except on the flat portions of the deserts, and these are rare, and one stony range is so like another in height and form, that you cannot spy out the spot. When you do, you find a paradise in the burning waste, for the water gives life to trees, shrubs, and grass, and when the water supply is large, to crops of corn. For days you may have been travelling amongst hills baked brown, along valleys the very ground of which is hot. Almost stifled by the heated air, you surmount a ridge, turn a corner, and lo! a group of trees, water murmuring through grassy banks, birds flitting about or singing in the bushes, life and hope revive. Great is the restful charm of colour to the eye weary with browns and yellows. The cool green of palm or mimosa is most grateful. Such is the general aspect of an oasis.

I have visited many a one, but in every desert the Bedouin know of others which they will not reveal to Europeans, for while there is so much animosity—tribe against tribe—it is all important that some oasis should only be known to the tribe which lives nearest.

The Story of an Oasis

To reveal where water may be found, may destroy all chance of life to an Arab fleeing from his foes. Therefore, every enemy tries to secure the wells or the oasis, knowing that if they can but hold the water supply, their foe must be driven away into the pure desert, which means death.

I often think of one oasis I saw in the desert of Sinai: it is unmarked on any maps; my Bedouin took me to it after I had solemnly promised never to reveal its whereabouts. We were camped in a stony gorge, barren granite hills surrounding us; we climbed some low ridges, and there below, in a secluded dell, a large pool of pure water fed by a strong spring issued from the rock. There were palm trees, papyrus, reeds and flowers. We refilled our water-skins, and returned happy to camp. If I were travelling there now, I do not think I could find the place, Nature has so hidden it away.

Such being the general characteristics of an oasis, let us now go back to the one at Kadesh. From Holy Writ we see that it must have been large—space enough for a multitude to camp at, and with a good supply of water, otherwise Chedorlaomer would not have selected it for his camp, nor would Moses. Later on, probably Hobab, who was eyes, or guide, to Moses, knew it. It must necessarily have been near the great highway tracks to Canaan. The ancient Egyptians knew of it, for inscriptions speak

The Story of an Oasis

of Kadesh of the Amorites, to distinguish it from Kadesh on the Orontes, Kadesh of the Hittites. Yet it was lost to modern explorers ; and even now in the ordinary Bible dictionaries and atlases the position is wrongly marked.

The Rev. J. Rowlands, chaplain to Bishop



AN OASIS

Alexander of Jerusalem, was the first to discover the true site. He was travelling in the desert to examine the southern boundary of the Holy Land. He well describes the awful character of the desert :

‘ It was a confused chaos of chalk, and had the appearance of an immense furnace glowing with white heat, illuminated as it now was by the fierce rays of the sun. There did not appear to be the

The Story of an Oasis

least particle of vegetation in all the dreary waste—all was drought and barrenness and desolation.'

He then describes his route and the discovery :

'Our excitement while we stood before the rock smitten by Moses, and gazed on the lovely stream which still issues forth from under the base of this rock, was such as baffles description. We paced backwards and forwards, examining the rock and the source of the stream, looking at the pretty little cascades which it forms as it descends into the channel of a rain torrent beneath. The rock is a large single mass or small hill of solid rock, the only visible naked rock in the whole district. The stream, running three hundred or four hundred yards, loses itself in the sand.'

Traveller after traveller, fired by this description, sought to visit this place. Professor Palmer, second to none in knowledge of Arab character and desert paths, was misled. The sheykh of his party admitted afterwards that he had purposely kept the great professor from seeing this oasis.

The Rev. F. Holland, who had no peer in his knowledge of the desert, left England purposely to try to find it. He was deterred 'by the disturbed state of the country, owing to constant raids of Arabs from the east, and by excessive drought.'

To the good fortune and perseverance of Dr. Trumbull, a celebrated American traveller, we owe

The Story of an Oasis

its rediscovery. He had the good fortune to persuade the Bedouin to take him there. He found that the place is now Ain Gades, which in Arabic has the same meaning as the Hebrew Kadesh, *i.e.* holy.

The plain amongst the hills is several miles wide, affording ample camping ground for a host; near is a 'water-bed of unusual fertility—fields of wheat and barley, with remains of plantations.' Dr. Trumbull says :

'It was a marvellous sight, out on the barren and desolate stretch of the burning desert waste! We had come with magical suddenness into an oasis of verdure and beauty unlooked for, and hardly conceivable in such a region. A carpet of grass covered the ground. Fig trees laden with fruit nearly ripe enough for eating were along the shelter of the southern hill-side. Shrubs and flowers showed themselves in variety and profusion, running water gurgled under the waving grass. We had seen nothing like it since leaving Wady Feiran, nor was it equalled in loveliness of scene by a single bit of landscape of like extent even then.'

And so in 1881 the lost oasis was found. We now know where Miriam died, and also the spot from which the forty years' wanderings of the Israelites began. It was the pivot of the wanderings.

IX

THE STORY OF AN AMORITE CITY

IN Chapter VIII. I described the oasis of Kadesh. Let us proceed to see something of the great event which happened there. The divinely inspired leader, Moses, at the direct command of God, selected twelve men—rulers of the people—a man for each tribe, and gave them orders to spy out the Land of Canaan. We saw that Kadesh was on the borders of that country, and near the great highways leading into it. Let us for a moment pause, to note the care and foresight of the great leader. He knew—none better—that the children of Israel were to possess the Promised Land. He knew—none better—that what God had promised He would fulfil; and yet, acting as a prudent man, he neglects no precaution, trusts nothing to chance, but takes the very steps any great general would take, even if he were not inspired. He determines to have this unknown land visited by spies—men in whom he can trust. They are thoroughly to examine the country, to return to Kadesh and report, Moses remaining there with the host. Two men stand out from the twelve—

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Oshea, the son of Nun, now to be henceforth known as Jehoshua, the other, Caleb, the son of Jephunneh.

The men all receive the same instructions, which are very precise. They are to examine the land, the people, to note their numbers, to judge if they be strong or weak, to note the soil, whether good land or poor, to note what timber the land possesses, and, to crown all, whether the people live in cities or tents. If the former, were they fortified, like some of those cities of Egypt so familiar to Moses?

This instance of caution and foresight illustrates the fact that though God promises always to lead His people, yet He does require of them to exercise every human care. Believers in Him are not to expect that miracles will always be worked on their behalf. There is an old proverb, which, familiar as it may be, brings out this fact : ' Heaven helps those who help themselves.' We are, moreover, told to be ' fellow workers with God.' We are told nothing as to whether these men were disguised. We hear nothing as to their conduct, if they were recognised by the people of the land or not as Hebrews ; no account of any difficulties or dangers.

They thoroughly examine the land from one end to the other, taking forty days to do this. This forty days was indeed a mystic number ; we find it often mentioned in Holy Writ. A sacred number, for the Great Deliverer, long years after, was forty days in

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the desert, tempted of Satan. Not only in cities, but even in the desert, will the Evil One be found ; an implied rebuke to those hermits who in later ages thought to escape all temptation by fleeing to deserts, to caves and holes in the rocks. God placed men in the world, and in the world of work, temptation, and sin they are to 'keep themselves unspotted from the world.'

We are told nothing of what took place in the camp while the spies were absent. Be sure of this, that Moses and Aaron often had anxious hours, as they wondered as to the whereabouts of their agents. No letters from them were possible, no means of finding out their position, or if they were faring well or ill ; but there is no doubt that many a time and oft did people climb the highest ridges which commanded a view, to see if in the far distance they could make out the little company. And when the time came that on the dreary desert lying between Kadesh and the south country they saw the tiny dark dots of figures, shouts would soon carry the news to the camp. What a scene of excitement ! Crowds accompany the wanderers to the tents of Moses, where to him and the leaders the story is to be related. Grapes were brought, to show what the fruits of the country were like. The bunches were slung to a pole, which was supported by two men. It does not follow that the bunches were huge ; really, it was the only sensible way to carry so tender

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a fruit as the grape. From ancient Egyptian pictures it appears to have been the way grapes were carried from the vineyards. Eshcol, we are told, was the place where these grapes had been grown. The word merely means cluster, and gives no clue to the locality, and though it is commonly thought to have been a valley near Hebron, I consider that idea must be given up. Grapes could not have been brought in good condition from Hebron to Kadesh. The whole country from Hebron southwards is, however, dotted with conical heaps of stones. This proves that grapes at one time were cultivated there, for in Palestine, when the young vine is planted, stones are piled round the stems. The branches are trailed over the heap. The lack of timber is, I imagine, the cause of this. Even to this day I have seen it done.

Now comes the report, which is most discouraging. The spies report that the land is good, but they are in dismay at the strength of the people and the size of their towns, which are, moreover, walled ; and then, to crown all, the sons of Anak dwell in them. These sons of Anak are represented on the Egyptian monuments as tall and fair, a giant race, Amalekites, Jebusites, Amorites ; we can also, from the Egyptian monuments, see what these people—these early dwellers in Palestine—were like.

The report had instantaneous effect. The people, elated in victory, were easily depressed ; ever faint-

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hearted, faithless, they wept, revolted, rebelled against Moses. And, deeper degradation still, proposed to elect a leader who should lead them back to Egypt! Slaves in soul, they sighed but for the fleshpots.

Two brave men stood out and tried to recall them to a sense of duty, recalling all the wonders God had wrought for them. The awful fiat went out that none of those cowards should enter the Promised Land, all were condemned to die in that wilderness; but the two brave-hearted men, Joshua and Caleb, were to be exceptions.

One of the things which seems to have established such a fear in the hearts of the spies and the Israelites was the great strength of the people of the land—and the walls of their cities.

In Num. xiii. 28 we read that the cities were 'walled and very great'; in Deut. i. 28 more alarming details are given—there it is said the cities were 'walled up to heaven,' a bit of true Eastern hyperbole.

The question now arises, Do we know anything about these ancient cities? Well, it is only in quite the last few years that we know anything positively. In 1890 the Palestine Exploration Fund obtained a firman from the Sultan to explore and excavate a mound called Tel-el-Hesy. This mound is about sixteen miles east of Gaza,. It is believed to be the site of ancient Lachish, which is so often mentioned in the early days of Joshua. Professor Flinders Petrie com-



From photo by permission]

TEL-EL-HESIY (LACHISH)

[Palestine Exploration Fund.

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menced the work, and, as usual with all he undertakes, his discoveries were of great interest. Later on, the work has been continued by Mr. F. J. Bliss.

It would be impossible here to relate all the strange and wonderful things found by these two explorers. They found traces of many cities built one above the ruins of the other, but the earliest is Amorite, built about 2000 B.C. Fragments of a town have been uncovered, thickly covered over with a layer of ashes, showing how complete was its destruction by Joshua. Then, as for a wall—well, a wall of unburnt brick, over eleven feet in thickness, marks the remains of the ancient wall, ten to eleven feet high, with such masses of *débris* at its base—*débris* of the same sort of brick—that probably the wall was originally forty or fifty feet high. See its position in my sketch, where the straight line through the middle of the mound marks the position of the old town. The bank behind shows the *débris* of the successively destroyed towns. The site seems to have been finally abandoned about 400 B.C., and not for twenty-four centuries was anything done to explore. Pottery, flint implements, bronzes—many, many were the ‘finds,’ and are fully described in the books published by the Palestine Exploration Fund. One thing, however, I must note—a furnace was found so constructed that a hot blast of air was used; so that 1400 years B.C. or thereabouts, what is called a modern improvement, and patented in 1828, was

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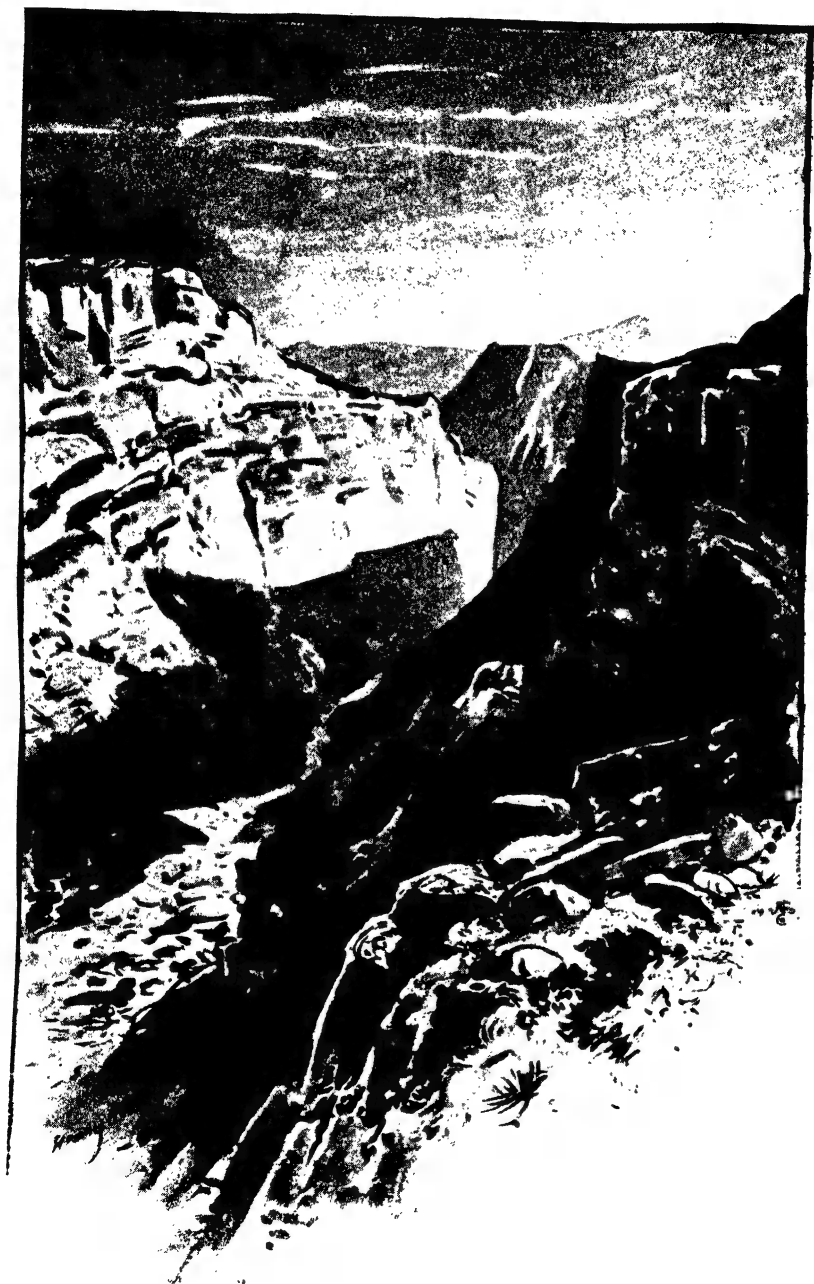
known to those ancient Amorites. Jars, mace-heads, were found in quantity, and finally a tablet of baked clay, written in those days when pre-Israelite Canaan possessed its libraries of clay-tablets, as did Assyria and Babylon.

But my present purpose is to show how true the report of those spies was. A city with an eleven feet thick wall, and high in proportion, must have seemed to those dwellers in tents as if 'walled up to heaven,' and being built on a hill would add to the apparent height of the wall. As to the size of the people, it is well known that still in Palestine you have existing a race of men of giant stature; one of my most trusty men was six feet four inches, and he was not peculiar.

The spies saw the strength, they knew they had no war-engines to batter down those walls, they estimated the strength of their foe, but forgot one thing, the all-essential, that God had promised the land to them, that He had led and protected them through great dangers, and worked many miracles for them—and yet they doubted Him.

They looked—fatal mistake—at their own strength, and so brought ruin on themselves, and on their tribes.

There is a lesson for us here. If the path of duty, shown clear by God, is before us, on we must go; having once set our hand to the work, there must be no looking back.



THE VALLEY OF MICHMASH.

X

BETHEL

IT is my last day in Jerusalem. Sadly I revisit the favourite views, and sadly sit over the camp-fire, sorry to leave a place I love so much. Before the sun is up, camp is struck. Walking in front of my men, we reach the northern road, pass Calvary, descend the vale, and then wind up along the track which leads over Mount Scopus. How grand and solemn everything looks in the uncertain light! The ugly details of ruinous land and track are lost; but as we crest the hill light breaks over Olivet, and we turn to look our last on Jerusalem. How often had I felt, when painting hereabouts, the truth of David's description: 'Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion from the sides of the north!' This is said to be the view Titus had, when leading that army which was to avenge on priest and people the innocent blood shed on the tree. Scopus ('the prospect') gave a full view of the Temple and town; and here Titus ordered a camp to be formed for two legions, hard by another camp for the fifth legion.

Bethel

After this view we plod on ; for, though the land is full of Biblical interest, every yard recalling Old Testament history, the sun now only shows the desolation of the country—so very desolate that it is positively ugly, almost unpaintable. There is one exception, a distant view of Mizpeh, the well-known Neby Samwil. From that high point one gets, when coming up by the Bethhoron road, that view of Jerusalem on the distant sky-line which Richard the Lion-hearted refused to gaze upon, saying, as he covered his eyes: ‘O Lord God, I pray I may never see Thy Holy City, if so be that I may not rescue it from the hands of Thine enemies!’ That hill of Mizpeh is truly, as old Sir John Mandeville calls it, ‘a very fair and delicious place ; and,’ he adds, ‘it is called Mount Joy because it gives joy to pilgrims’ hearts, for from that place men first see Jerusalem.’

Now ruinous sites come thick and fast : Gibeah, now Tuleil el-Fûl, with its conical hill covered with shapeless ruins, the birthplace of Saul, the capital of his kingdom, now a ruined extent of wall ; heaps of stones, a fragment of a tower, a scar of white on the greyer *débris* marking where the late Tyrwhitt Drake excavated, hoping to find ruins. Close by is Shafat, by some thought to be ruins of Nob. But before we pass on we must not forget to climb Gibeah, and feast our eyes once more on Jerusalem ; the view is very extensive and very fine. And now full in front

comes a view which recalls the earliest days of Israel—Er Râm, once Ramah ('the high place'), the birthplace of the prophet Samuel. The situation is commanding; the village is now ruinous.

How close together these places lie, may be judged from the fact that all I have described is within the limits of a walk. Travellers ride too much in the Holy Land, and so miss a great deal of the interest. As for fatigue, why, men for pleasure or sport will walk their twenty or thirty miles in a day, and why not here? Believe me, far more can be learned in a few walks than in scores of miles traversed on horseback. And here I may as well say that it often occurred to me, while walking over this northern road, that the old Jew could never have been in the modern sense of the word a 'traveller.' Centuries of neglect may have made this road bad, but no neglect could have altered the lie of the ground. The steep gradients of the hills, the almost impassable ravine—these must have existed then as now; and though at Passover feast-time great multitudes of people may have traversed the roads, yet they must have been impassable for commerce, as the modern world understands the word, for in winter the trackway must often be a mere watercourse. Then, again, how narrow it often is in many places—two loaded camels could not pass!

These rounded hills, these shut-in valleys, and this narrow road, give, I think, a side view of the very

Bethel

nature of the Jewish polity : it was intensely local ; the Jew was to a greater extent than people are apt to think cut off from the world. The Old Testament Scriptures reflect this fact—there is no mention of the great nations touching their borders except when they come in contact or conflict with the chosen people. Local self-government was here carried out to its fullest



THE CREST OF THE HILL AT BETHEL.

extent ; these valleys with their limited horizons helped the idea that the Jew was all in all to Jehovah. One has only, I think, to leave these Judæan hills and vales and pass into Galilee, to comprehend at a glance how the spirit of Christianity is reflected from its source. There in Galilee you get a horizontal line, so to speak, for you see the great sea westwards, telling of other nations—of another world outside the Jewish pale.

Such is Christianity—the land encouraged the faith and fed it ; it included other than Jew.

We will leave this north road, and turn off to the right, that we may visit a wild ravine—Michmash, now called Wady Suweinit, so called from *seneh* (Heb.), a thorn. This valley is called by Josephus the Valley of Thorns. There we can see with our bodily eyes the scene of that great deliverance for the Hebrews, when, during the reign of Saul, the Philistines in overpowering force invaded the land, and the people of Israel lost heart (1 Sam. xiii. 6), and hid themselves in holes and caves. They were ever ready enough to do that, though some few, stout-hearted, ventured to remain with Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin. From that stronghold they could watch with sad eyes the spoilers ravaging the land. This remarkable gorge is accurately described in 1 Sam. xiv. 4, with its ‘sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side.’ The northern cliff is called Bozez, the shining ; the southern Seneh, the thorn. To climb Bozez would require a cooler head than mine. Jonathan and his armour-bearer must have been skilled mountaineers ; and the Philistines no doubt thought their flank was quite safe while resting on such a cliff. But the weakness of the assailants was the opportunity for God to manifest again His protecting hand. The daring climbers are rewarded by a great victory. The mixed Philistine host in their panic fight amongst themselves, and, flying

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headlong, are destroyed. How reasonable the whole story reads as one looks on the place I find it impossible to tell.

But before we quit this gorge we must think of another great deliverance, and read Isa. x. 28. How vividly does the prophet foretell the invader's march! We seem to hear the tread of the mighty host, the clash of their weapons, and to see the glare of those conquering eyes, which had carried the symbols of Assyrian power over so much of the Eastern world. Well might their leaders haughtily recall their victories! 'Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?' Read too that description of Joel ii. 4-10, and you will understand how the earth was said to 'quake before them.' Look on their stern faces, as depicted in the Assyrian marbles in the British Museum. Then again read Isa. x. 28-32: 'He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron [the precipice]; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: they are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As

yet shall he remain at Nob that day : he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.' As we read these passages and see the ground, do we not feel the march of this all-conquering power? Michmash proving too steep for



RAMAH, THE BIRTHPLACE OF SAMUEL.

his chariots, he there leaves them, and, pressing on, stronghold after stronghold falls before him ; he is permitted to ' shake his hand at Zion.' And then swift comes the end, the appalling disaster, and the sacred city once more is saved.

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Let us return to the main road, for Beeroth (El Bireh) claims attention. Hereabouts the land is fertile, the villages good—for there is delicious water, bubbling from a strong spring : a fine fountain with picturesque groups of people—women washing clothes, pilgrims resting. Russian pilgrims are on this road in numbers, marching northwards, like ourselves. Here are the ruins of a Crusaders' church, said to have been built by English knights. This place is the first halting-place for pilgrims from Jerusalem, and gives good ground for belief that here it was that Joseph and Mary discovered that the Child Jesus was not with them. We read in St. Luke ii. 42–44 that they had paid their usual annual visit to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, and left on their return journey. Doubtless they went in company—a caravan, in short, of people who, like themselves, were returning to Galilee and the north. The Child was not with them ; but they concluded He was in the company ; and when, after the first day's journey, which would naturally be to the well at Beeroth, they sought Him, they found Him not amongst the crowd. After their search they returned at once to Jerusalem, and for three weary days sought Him sorrowing. He would repass Beeroth and pass to Nazareth, and there be 'subject to His parents, growing in stature, and in favour with God and man.' Beeroth has some good threshing-floors—bare rocks on the highest points—

still used, one 'floor' divided from another by low walls of stone.

And now still on. The trackway is very bad ; the ground less cultivated. Suddenly we dip down, and are at Bethel. Let us camp near the tank or cistern, which is large, some three hundred feet by two hundred



BETHEL : RUINS OF THE GREAT TANK OR RESERVOIR.

feet ; good draughted stones, with a bevel, form the wall at one end, under which the water disappears as if into a culvert. The spring which fills this cistern is at the upper end, and is strong, the water good. This is really the only relic of antiquity I could discover. The ruins are very extensive, covering several acres, but I failed to get any idea of the plan or shape of the city, the ruins are so shapeless, so complete has been the

Bethel

destruction. Do you seek confirmation of the truth of Holy Writ? Then wander over these shapeless heaps with me; and recall to mind that these heaps were Bethel, 'the house of God'; and that, when it became a centre for false worship—that of calves—the name was changed to Bethaven, 'the house of naught.' This is the end, these the proofs. But, as we are at Bethel, let us see what the land is like, and what are the leading events in its history.

The spot chosen by Abraham, and where he pitched his tent on his way to Egypt; we are told he here erected an altar. From earliest times we always hear of altars being erected on hills. There was no sin in that, if only the altar was to the Lord God Jehovah. Afterwards we read of the fugitive who, when the sun was set, took stones of that place and put them for his pillow; he there gets that great vision of the ladder reaching to heaven, and he in grateful remembrance set up a pillar, probably an upright stone or menhir. From these occurrences rises the sanctuary of Bethel. It was more—it was a stronghold, a fortress, on the northern side; it was soon to be the rival to Jerusalem, for when the kingdom of David was split up, the glories of Solomon's Temple on Mount Moriah were copied by the false worship on the hills of Bethel. Some explorers believe that they can find at Bethel traces of the temple Jeroboam built. If so, from that hill plateau the true and the false could at one glance be seen.

Jeroboam chose to erect an altar at Bethel, which was quite the southern end of his kingdom, to prevent the Israelites from wandering off to the Temple at Jerusalem, and because of the strength of its natural position. It was like every Egyptian temple, a fortress as well as a sanctuary.

So this worship of the calves, or, as Josephus puts it, heifers, as also the later worship of Baal at Bethel, were parodies of the true worship. Jeroboam introduced the first on his return from his exile in Egypt, doubtless owing to the influence of his Egyptian wife, who was sister to Shishak's own queen. It was only, he might plead, the revival of that worship of the calf or bull with which the Israelites at Heliopolis in the days of the oppression in Egypt were so familiar, and which must have had such a fascination for them that even in the desert they got Aaron to copy it. At that time of Egyptian history the bull Apis was supposed to be the principal deity—black, with a white star on his forehead. We can judge how he was honoured, by the labour bestowed on his tombs at Sakhara. Red bullocks were sacrificed to him. Now red was the supposed colour of Typho, the power of evil of the Egyptians ; so when we read (Num. xix. 2) that red heifers were commanded to be sacrificed to the Lord, we read between the lines a reproof to the Egyptian worship. Moses understood this, for when he is told (Exod. viii. 25, 26) by Pharaoh to go and sacrifice to the Lord, he says : 'It is not

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meet so to do ; for we shall sacrifice the *abomination* of the Egyptians to the Lord our God' ; as much as to say : ' We shall sacrifice to God the red heifer, which you Egyptians look upon as an abomination, and you sacrifice to the principle of evil ! ' Later on came Baal worship, consisting of incense burning, burnt sacrifices, and *human victims* (Jer. xix. 5) : ' They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal.' Their priests shouted and cut themselves with knives. All Eastern nations thought their gods slept in the heat of the day, and it was not lawful to enter their temples, and so risk disturbing them at that hour ; so we see that Elijah, when on Carmel he mocked them in the middle of the day (1 Kings xviii. 27), sneered at this belief ; and it was not till evening, after using every incantation they could think of, that the priests lost heart. In the days of Josiah the altar, ' the high place,' was destroyed and burned. The destruction foretold was complete. Now no longer Bethel, but Bethaven, it remains a ' house of naught' (see Hos. iv. 15 ; Amos v. 5). Most of the other Judæan towns or villages can somehow be traced, but not so here. As to plan, I cannot charge my memory with seeing anywhere else such heaps of shattered masonry, so confused, *so ugly* in their desolation and barrenness.

Heavy rains fell while I was at Bethel. Sketching had to be given up, so, sitting in my tent, I pondered on this solemn history. The present inhabitants of

this wretched place must be scanty in numbers. I saw few—some women who came to draw water at the spring which fills the tank—but no one except a shepherd or two spoke at all to the stranger. But if there are few human beings there are plenty of rats ; at night they swarmed into my tent in search of food ; not till dawn was it possible to rest or sleep. One fine effect, and only one, did I see at Bethel. One evening just before sunset the clouds lifted, the rain stayed, and then a flash of golden light poured over the hillside, sending the wet rocks and ruins into a glorious mass of colour. In a few moments the glory was gone, and the naked hideousness of the ruined heaps was left in silence and gloom.

The lesson Jerusalem and Bethel teach is the same, different only in degree : wherever priestcraft or temple-building is the sole thought, then ruin comes to a country. In Jerusalem the priests had had the true faith committed to them—they forsook it ; they thought that the great Temple on Moriah would perpetuate their rule. In less than forty years after the crucifixion of our Lord that Temple was burned with fire, and no stone left upon another. Jeroboam thought his temple would perpetuate his rule and line—it is a ‘thing of naught.’ Later history has repeated the error and the lesson. Let us not fall into the same mistake, but seek to build up a *living Church* of the souls of saved men, redeemed by the merits of the Lamb.

XI

SHILOH

FROM Bethel we continue our northward journey. The road is a hilly one, sometimes over the crests, more often in the valley, or up the edge of steep ravines. There is one difficult pass, that of Wady el Jib, very narrow; and yet this must have been the main north road in olden time. At one part of the pass there is a perpendicular rock; at its foot, the Robbers' Fountain, where are several cisterns cut partly out of the rock, and partly made of large blocks of masonry. A good spring of pure water flows here. The hills are cliff-like, with flattened crests; olive trees clothe the slopes. As we descend, the hills become rounder at their summits, the valley widens and loses its savage character, and then the road becomes a series of trackways straggling across the more level ground.

A smaller bytrack leads off on the right hand. This track is quite like an English lane—there is a high bank on one side, open fields on the other. This is the path which leads to the little plain where, on a

LOOKING SOUTH FROM SHILOH.



slight knoll, the ruins of Shiloh stand. A little way down this track I was at once arrested by seeing a man working in a vineyard. The sight was unique, for though I had seen the vineyard of the German colonists at Jaffa and the villages near, yet those vines were planted on the sand dunes, the vine being allowed to trail along the ground ; but here what was so peculiar was that the man, having planted the vine, was piling stones in a pyramidal heap round the root and stem, the heap about three feet high. The vine branches were then allowed to trail over the heap. On the now desert hills near Engedi, I had before this been puzzled by the heaps of stones which in places cover the hillsides. We are told that in old time that region was famous for its vines, and yet now for grapes it only brought forth heaps of stones ! A freethinker with whom I had happened to converse had much ridiculed the old statement, and I had been at a loss for an answer ; but these heaps which this man was making round the vine explained the whole mystery. The vines of Engedi had vanished, but the stone heaps to support the vines remained, a side proof that the Bible statement was truth.

Now we reach the little plain, and up the northern end of it we find the knoll I before spoke of, and the ruins. There is no grandeur in the situation—it is very secluded from the world ; there is no city or village, for the smallest Arab village, Seilun, is about

Shiloh

two miles away ; but remember, its position is almost in the centre of Palestine. So for the encampment of the sacred tent the first leaders of the Hebrews chose this spot ; for Bethel, which afterwards became a most hallowed spot, was not at that time in their hands.



RUINS OF SHILOH.

So secluded is the place that for long years it was unknown to travellers, but its position is accurately marked in Judges xxi. 19 : ‘ Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the *north* side of Bethel, on the *east* side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the *south* of Lebonah.’ How very exact this description is, one realises as we near the place ; but for this and

the name (Seilun), it would have been impossible to identify it. And what wonder, when we read Jer. vii. 12: 'Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My Name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people



INTERIOR OF RUINED TEMPLE, SHILOH.

Israel'; and Jer. xxvi. 6: 'I will make this house like Shiloh, . . . a curse to all the nations of the earth.'

This now deserted little plain was the resting-place of the Ark for nearly three hundred years. The people of the land selected for their idol-worship every high hill, but on this little knoll the 'house' or 'temple' of 'Shiloh,' or 'rest,' was built to the Lord God. When the profligate sons of Eli were defeated and 'the Ark

Shiloh

of God taken,' ruin following the destruction of the Israelitish army, that epoch of history closed during which 'the house of God was in Shiloh.' Let us now examine the ground: from the knoll there is a good view looking south, over the little plain; in other directions it is quite shut in. The ruins are of two periods: there is a low, oblong building of old masonry, the stones not large, but with a bevel, rising about two yards high, roofless; another ruin is joined on, evidently that of an early Christian church, for it has a pointed arch; the interior is a confused mass of broken columns overgrown with weeds. The older ruin is bare. It is remarkable that the Jewish tradition says that the sanctuary of Shiloh was 'a structure of low stone walls, with the tent drawn over the top.' The old walls are about four feet thick, though the area of the building was very small; massive stones are scattered all over the knoll. Near to the ruins, but on lower ground, is a well cut out of the rock, which here crops up and gives a level plateau. A swift brook runs close by. This well or tank is of considerable size. I could not discover if the tank was filled from the brook, or if there was any conduit between them, there was so much water both in brook and tank, perhaps swollen by recent rains.

Would not this be the likely place for the dance of the daughters of Shiloh? (Judges xxi. 21). All Eastern gatherings are ever close to 'wells.' Near

this level ground the hills north and west come close up ; and there in the vineyards the men of Benjamin might hide themselves. There also close by is a grand old terebinth tree, so old, one fancied it might have stood even in the days when Eli and Samuel ministered to the Lord. In the cliffs north are some rock-cut tombs, few in number, nothing remarkable in their



THE WELL AT SHILOH.

character but their age. Jewish tradition says Eli was buried here. Little indeed is there left to mark the 'Camp of Shiloh,' for it was only known as 'the *tabernacle* or *tent* that God had pitched among men.'

My work done, I took the route west, down a valley, then over some low hills through scanty corn crops and rich grass, from which quail rose in quantity. Shooting some, I got a pleasant variety of food. Here

Shiloh

too were flocks of the graceful black and white stork. The ground was well watered, for there were frequent swamps from springs. I halted at a new camp near Lebonah, and close to the ruins of a large khan, at the foot of the hills.

Lebonah is an imposing village placed on high ground ; a populous place, with some old buildings in it. I was unable to see much of it, for the weather, which had been squally, now settled into wet, with heavy thunderstorms. Tents were soon soaked through ; bed was out of the question ; so, putting up my white sketching-umbrella inside the tent, I sat, waterproof on, on my camp stool, with feet on large stones, while the water poured under—the trenches outside being unable to carry it off—and so I wrote up my notes. A number of Jews on their way to keep the Passover at Jerusalem stayed near me, without tents or shelter of any kind, except what the ruins of the old khan afforded. They were in wretched plight. I sheltered as many women and children as my tents would hold, and all night tried to keep up a charcoal fire in my own tent, that I might make hot coffee for the poor people outside. The night was very wild, lightning vivid and thunder loud, joined to which jackals in packs howled round us ; getting bold, they came close to us. One Jew had a revolver, which he fired frequently. One of my men cleaned his own gun, which it appears he did by pouring some water down the barrels ! Then he

reloaded. I heard the constant snapping of caps, but no report, and was then consulted as to what could be the matter, and found he had forgotten to dry the *inside* of the barrels! His remark about his gun was a quaint one. He said, 'When it was not loaded it frightened two men,' meaning the Arabs. 'When it was loaded it frightened *one* man,' meaning himself.

When morning broke, the whole country looked flooded; sheets of rain, and general grey, made the hills look like Wales. The storm cleared about midday, then grand masses of cumulus filled the sky, mist lifted from the hillsides, down which the spouting lines of water shot just like a spate in Scotland or Wales.

Through pools of water I started on my way north, meeting numbers of women going to a well near Lebonah. This well was high up on the right of the road, and seemed of great antiquity. It was a most picturesque subject, but I was too worn out from want of sleep to sketch. Hundreds of women were coming down from some hills close by, with bundles of wood on their heads—wood, I was told, torn down by the storm; there must be somewhere near quite a forest to provide so much timber. These women were nearly all unveiled, and many very handsome, like the women of Bethlehem, dressed much in the same way. Some were shy, and caught up a corner of the loose jackets to hide their mouths, as the 'Howadji' rode past.

Lebonah and the villages near must have a large

Shiloh

population. The country now was very fertile, corn lands principally in the valleys, and black oxen were grazing on the hill-slopes—a small beast much like the black cattle of North Wales; but of men I saw very few—they were taken away, I heard, by conscription for soldiers.

It is impossible to leave the neighbourhood of Shiloh without thinking of the time this word was first used, as related in the Bible. Jacob is about to be gathered to his fathers, and his prophetic eye ranges over the future of his descendants, and he breaks out into that inspired song: ‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be’ (Gen. xlix. 10).



THE VIEW FROM JACOB'S WELL, LOOKING OVER THE PLAIN OF MOREH.
'Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

XII

JACOB'S WELL

COMING from Shiloh, we have climbed the ridge of the watershed, and look now on the mountain of Ephraim. It is difficult to realise that it is an Eastern land. The summits of the hills are covered with drifting clouds ; bright flashes of sunlight chase one another over the ground. The prevailing tone of colour is grey and green ; and as I halt to sketch, sending my baggage-mules on, the resemblance to home views grows strongly upon me. Any one who has looked down on the Glyders from above Capel Curig can imagine something of the view which meets the eye. In the distant hills there is less of that terrace character which is so strongly felt in painting the Judæan hills ; the foreground rocks, though grey, are covered with patches of yellow lichen, wild flowers in great variety and beauty peeping out between.

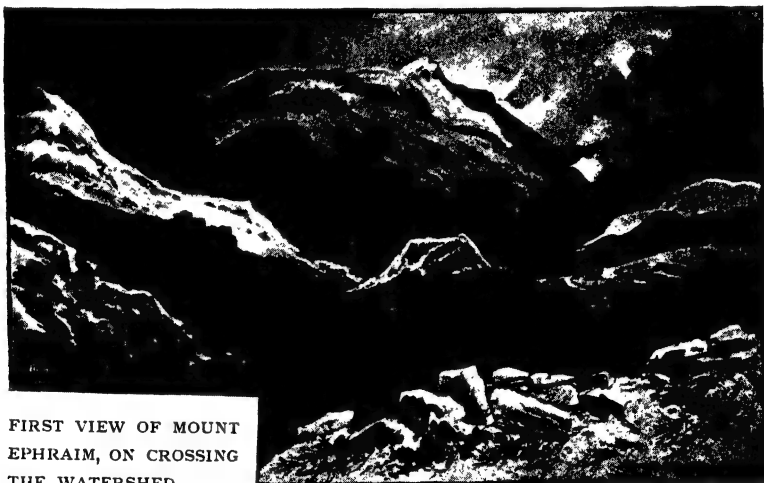
Sketching done, I descend the ridge, cross the Plain of Moreh, and reach Jacob's Well, where I had hoped to find my camp pitched ; but I arrive to find nothing

Jacob's Well

done, for an angry crowd of Turkish soldiers and fellahin declare that no Christian is ever allowed to camp there. I inquire for the pasha, or colonel of the garrison, and am told that he is in the barracks. I go there, request an immediate interview, and am taken into a room where several officers are reclining and smoking. I am by this time quite accustomed to Eastern officials, so with all the politeness I possess I explain that I am an *effendi* or 'man of the book,' that I had come to write down the country—for that is what Easterns call painting—and that I wished to camp at Jacob's Well. The pasha rose, shook me by the hand, complimented me on my courage for travelling in such wild weather, wondered how I had lived in the recent storms, and offered me a room in the barracks. I explained that my work required quiet, otherwise I would have accepted his kindness; and the affair ended by his sending some soldiers—a fatigue party—to pitch my tents and trench the ground, giving me two soldiers for guard. When I got away I could think of the odd appearance I must have presented, for I was spattered from head to foot with mud, owing to the wet state of the country.

Before sunrise next day I was at work on a very misty effect, quite like Scotland for its beauty; and after breakfast I began the work I had especially come to do. Soon, however, I was surrounded by a crowd of fellahin—big, burly fellows, armed with that

great Arab club peculiar to the fellahin of Palestine, who soon gave me to understand they would not allow me to stop there. 'I had a country of my own, and I should not bring Engelese there to take their country from them.' I told them I loved my country too well to live away from it long, but that I was a man of the book, and *the* Book told me of Jacob who dug



FIRST VIEW OF MOUNT
EPHRAIM, ON CROSSING
THE WATERSHED.

the well; and so I had come to write it down, to show people at home what it was like. 'Jacob,' said they, 'was their father. What did I know of him?' So from my pocket Bible I told them how the well was dug—told them of Jacob and his history. This was accompanied with running comments of, 'Wonderful that our book should tell of their fathers, and they know nothing of it.' I persuaded them to leave an

Jacob's Well

opening in front of my easel ; and so, with a ring around me, I painted on hour after hour, and they seemed most interested and quiet. Shouts of delight followed when I made a rapid sketch in colour of some of the men ; and after I had given them a small present I was left in peace, and never more disturbed in any of my sketches.

Mount Gerizim is a fine bit of rock, rising 2,600 feet above sea-level. The upper portion is bare, but with grass and corn growing on the lower slopes. A tiny Mohammedan chapel, or *wely*, cuts the sky-line, close by which exist some ruins which mark the site of the Samaritan temple. The foreground near the well is covered with scattered stone and bits of masonry. The well is a hole with a few hanging grasses and wild flowers straggling down the opening, which is partly choked with the *débris* which has fallen into it. Of all the manifold sites in Palestine this is the only undisputed one. Jewish tradition carefully kept to the latest times the site of the well 'our father Jacob' digged ; so here we may feel assured that we look upon a scene our Lord's eyes rested upon. This is the mountain to which the woman pointed when she spoke of their worship, and this the well from which such lessons were drawn. Looking from the well over the Plain of Moreh, our eye ranges over corn lands, and we feel with increased force the meaning of the words : 'Lift up

your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.'

The well is still deep, a fact I often proved by



MOUNT GERIZIM AND MOUNT EBAL.

dropping a stone down ; it always seemed so long before one heard the plunge into the water. The well is cut out of the rock, and said to be seventy-five feet deep, and always to have twelve feet of water in it.

Jacob's

Probably because of its depth the water would be very cool, and particularly pure: and Easterns are remarkable for their love of water from particular wells, a fact I often have noted. Nile water was even brought to England, when the late Khedive came some years ago, so that his Highness might drink of his native stream. Similar reasons probably influenced the Samaritan woman to come to this well for water.

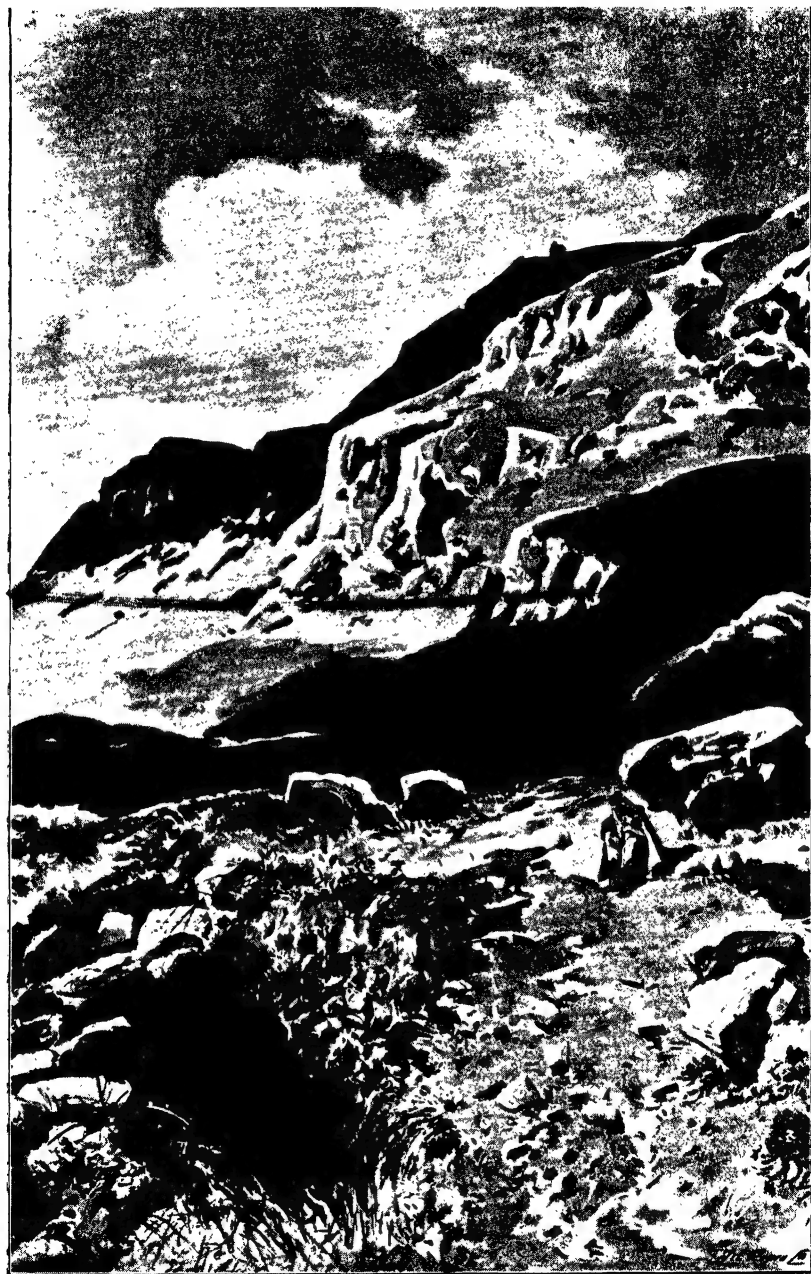
There are several small streams which run from the hills near Jacob's Well, but they pass to the west of it, and perhaps dry up in the summer; and Jacob was a cautious man, and would not wish to have any squabbles with the people of the land; so that would, I think, explain why he purchased this plot of ground, and sunk the well, following the example of his grandfather Abraham at Beersheba.

Quite close to the well is Joseph's tomb, where possibly still exist the bones of the patriarch, for his body was embalmed before burial.

In thinking over the circumstances which hallow this spot to Christians, two things are, I think, often forgotten. First the woman came at midday—

‘The sultry hour of noon.’

Jesus was sitting alone; the disciples had ‘gone away to buy bread,’ when down the little pathway comes the woman. Why was she alone? Because she could not come with the other women; they would



JACOB'S WELL.

not associate with her ; she was a harlot ! Then, as now, women always go in company to draw water, usually in the morning and in the evening. Often when I have camped at wells in Palestine have I noted this old custom ; and if ever at the midday hour a solitary woman came, she was always of the same wretched class. This was what made the disciples marvel that ' He talked with the woman ' ; but there was a soul to be saved, and that poor sinning woman had in her mind grasped a truth which rabbi and disciple had missed. They looked for a Messiah for the Jew only ; she said, ' I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ : when He is come, He will tell *us* all things ' (John iv. 25). Though a Samaritan, and, moreover, a sinner, she had got hold of the greater truth that Christ who was to come would be the Messiah to the world, Gentile as well as Jew. This is why, I think, our Lord rewards her by that first clear statement that He was the Saviour. Then, too, water to an Eastern is always an emblem and type of life, not as Westerns think of it, chiefly in its cleansing capacity, but for its life-giving power, creating, fertilising, and renewing in the fainting soul the ' new life.'

It was a great desire of mine that Jacob's Well might be cleaned out and restored. The Palestine Exploration Fund had some money given them by a lady for that purpose ; but, after all our plans were

Jacob's Well

completed for a low wall and entrance-gate (to keep cattle from straying into it), the great Bishop of Jerusalem objected, unless a monk was left in charge, and no Moslem allowed to drink the water; so all is left to ruin and disorder. How far off is Christianity yet from the example of our loving Lord!



THE TELEGRAPH AT JACOB'S WELL.



XIII

SAMARIA

ON a lovely morning I made an early start for Samaria, now called Sebaste. Through corn-fields and olive groves I took a track which avoids the streets of Nablous. Mist was lying thick on the hills of Gerizim and Ebal.

I frequently halt to sketch, and note the fertility of the ground. Gone is now the barrenness which frequently saddens you in Judæa. Here too is abundance of water—ruined aqueducts ; a stream like a Scotch burn ; a water-mill—the first I have seen in Palestine ; luxuriant foliage and abundant flowers.

A road leads off to Jaffa on the left. Passing through fields, where fellahin are busy ploughing, I come to quite a forest of olive trees, which fully realise the frequent allusions in Holy Writ to the beauty of this tree. With stems as grand as Sherwood Forest oaks, they are yet full of vigorous life, for we see now the young olive trees growing out from the parent root, like the children of the happy father of old.

An archway spans the road, then comes a gorge

Samaria

difficult of approach, and Sebaste is in view—at the head of the fat valley. The first object seen is the ruin of the Church of St. John—said to be the parent Church of St. John in Palestine. By a steep and narrow path you ascend the hill, through a miserable village, on to the hill-top.

I was much impressed in Samaria with the strength and beauty of its position, and the manner in which it realises the descriptions of the prophets. The hill is of great size, terraced by nature and art. It stands in a sloping plain—that is, the plain slopes towards the hill ; higher mountains, well thrown back, surround it. Two openings or passes exist westwards, through which one sees the great sea ; other passes lead into the country and over the hills. The ruins are all over the hill, some even at its base. On the western side are two huge towers or gateways, the foundations of which are of large stones ; the towers slope inwards, and the upper courses are of smaller stones. Can this be a portion of the ‘temple to Baal,’ the headquarters of that false worship ? Relics of the city built by Herod abound : a ‘street’ of columns, ruins of a theatre, and other fragments. Trees grow on the summit ; ‘lentil’ is cultivated on the flat spaces between the ruins. Land is being ploughed for corn on the slopes, and confused masses of stones and masonry are mixed up with the crops. The slopes of the hillside show that the buildings were thrown down, for from summit to base

débris lies scattered. What says the prophecy?—‘I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley.’

The villagers were not friendly, and disliked my sketching. I noticed in the houses that some of the doorways had carved capitals built into the mud walls; often columns were used as doorsteps to hovels or cattle inclosures. The church has large underground cloisters, where cattle now are stabled. The women of the place were much occupied in spinning. Sitting by the roadside, one of them offered me a valuable *antiqua*—a halfpenny of the time of the Georges!

The city of Samaria is never mentioned in the New Testament; its interest lies in Old Testament story, where it is distinguished by being the centre of Baal worship: it is called (2 Kings x. 25) ‘the city of the house of Baal.’ Its original name, Shomeron, means ‘watch-mountain,’ corrupted through the Chaldee, Shemria, thence Samaria. The choice of situation shows great military foresight on the part of Omri, for it bars the great passes from the west—from the Plain of Esdraelon to the heart of Judæa. So strongly is it placed, that twice it repelled the attacks of the Syrians. Ben-hadad’s first army must have been great, for we read of ‘thirty and two kings with him’; and in the second siege the blockade was so severe and long that famine set in. From those higher hills on the northern side it would be easy for the invaders to see the state of the famishing city, while from the city walls the

Samaria

people could plainly see the hosts of the foe. How terrible that famine was, we read in the story of 2 Kings vi. 26-30! What a tale for a king to hear! And yet see how perverted his mind was—he charges the prophet of God with being the author of all the calamities of the land! The gate at which the four famishing lepers sat was probably near the ruins of the church; and down that steep path, up which I had approached, poured out that famished throng who crushed the sneering noble who had charge of the gate. Close to the ruined church is a large reservoir, probably the Pool of Samaria, where Ahab's chariot was washed after that fatal day which avenged the innocent blood of Naboth, by a bow drawn 'at a venture.'

The old city of Baal had priests so numerous that we read of four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and four hundred of the 'grove,' or Asherah—the latter the foul worship of the Syrian Venus. It was greatly beautified by Jezebel, who wished to destroy the prophets of God; and yet it was warned again and again: 'I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.' See the gathered heaps of stones on the hill—the scattered crops in and around them—the masses of ruined masonry; and then say if this prophecy has not been fulfilled. The way the stones and columns are *thrown down* the slopes is exactly



described in—‘ I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley.’ Read the words of Isaiah (xxviii. 1): ‘ Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim ’; and then of Amos (vi. 1): ‘ Woe to them that . . . trust in the mountain of Samaria.’ Even in its ruin now, we can see from the old terraces how in its day of pride every hill was covered with the shadow of the vine.

Except for the ruin on the western side and the pool, nothing exists *above ground* of the old city of Ahab, but a good deal of that city of Herod, called after his patron Augusta. Little is known of its history: it was taken by the Mohammedans before Jerusalem fell into their hands; once or twice it is mentioned by early Christian pilgrims; then all notice of it disappears. I have often wished that exploration work with the spade could be commenced here, for I feel sure valuable discoveries might be made.

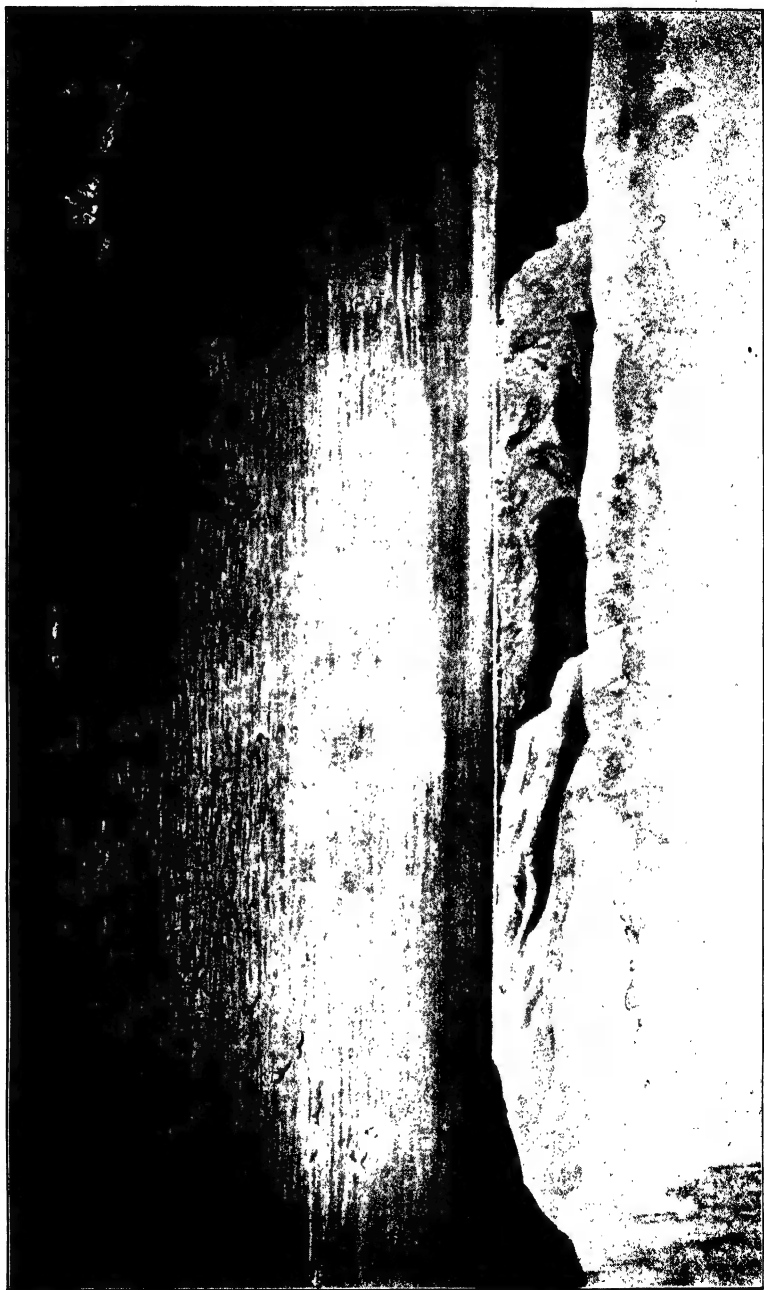
XIV

THE SEA OF GALILEE

WHILE wandering over the hills of Galilee, I determined that my first view of the sea should be from high ground, so that I might at one glance obtain a comprehensive idea of the whole of it. I had been greatly charmed with the views of the past few days; for Hermon northwards always gave a fine point to the pictures, while the views looking back towards Tabor were so rich in foliage that I could think of nothing to compare with them but the scenery round Dorking and Betchworth. Some sketches of Tabor and the hills near, from Khan-el-Tajar, especially delighted me. Misty effects were common: at dawn all would be grey and cold; but as the sun got up wreaths of rosy mist hung about the crests and hollows of the hills, their bases hidden in a sea of white. Song-birds and flocks of storks abounded—the latter the only things which told me I was not painting on the hills above Bolton Abbey or in the rich Surrey vale.

I was much struck with the rank richness of vegetation. Great breadths of land were covered with

THE SEA OF GALILEE FROM THE CLIFF ABOVE AIN-EL-TIN, LOOKING SOUTH.



wild corn (the 'tare' of Scripture); so high—it often towered above my head—that the little patches of cultivated corn looked quite small by comparison. Luxuriant grasses covered the slopes, and myriads of wild flowers of more beautiful form or colour than the wild hyacinth or orchid of an English woodland in spring. Here again I could not but be struck with the variety of Palestine—every sort of scenery, every kind of climate, every kind of vegetation. It only wants population. Bedouin and their camps, their flocks of goats and sheep, were the only living inhabitants. The Bedouin, shy at first, always got friendly over a pipe, though they were much puzzled by my sketching, which they thought a kind of magic. My men were often in a state of terror, but I never had the least cause to complain of their conduct to myself. One morning, after painting a Bedouin camp, I saw that oft-spoken-of mystery—the vulture's keenness for discovering dead bodies. A camel died: it was promptly skinned; before the operation was concluded a cloud of vultures appeared in the blue sky. A moment before I had seen nothing.

Finding I was now but a few hours from the sea, I rode on with one man, arranging that my men should pitch my tents near the hot wells at Tiberias. Soon I got my first view, more lovely even than I had expected to find it. Hundreds of feet below lay the sea; cliffs of fine colour ran down on the left hand,

The Sea of Galilee

looking north. Hermon rose up very grandly, clouds hanging on its summit, snow showing far down its side. The Kingdom of Bashan, with all its hill country and forests, lay in rose-red ; grey and flashes of white coming into more local colour on the barren hills opposite me, forming a great contrast to the hill country of Ephraim. Westwards was richer in tint : the little Plain of Gennesareth showed in varied tints of rose and green ; Tiberias telling white against the blue-purple sea, which sea was a most perfect mirror of the hills above. And now I got my experience of the changeful character of the Sea of Galilee. The reflections being so lovely, I began to paint the sea first, only rapidly outlining the hills above ; but before I could get what I wanted a squall struck the lake, and those quiet reflections gave place to a stormy grey-blue sea : black clouds, heavy rain. Half an hour, and there was sunlight and peace once more on earth, but no more reflections in the lake that day.

I spent a good deal of time on that western side, painting or sketching, and had many delicious days, with an endless beauty of effect, but I never saw so peaceful a sea again. The lake is unlike any I know, because it has so much variety. I know writers say it is like Derwentwater. I presume to say that that opinion is an imperfect one, formed on hasty visits. I know Derwentwater well, having painted on its shores for two months, and there is very little to my mind



SOUTH END OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

to remind one of the English lake. I give a series of views drawn from Nature, in the belief that it will be acceptable to every Christian to know something of a place so hallowed by the recollections of Him who walked so often by its shores, and from whose inhabitants He selected His first disciples.

Let us presume that we start from Tiberias, and go southwards to that end where the lake flows out into the Jordan. The cliffs are high, but fall back from the lake, leaving knolls and slopes covered with grass and thistles. We first pass the 'hot wells,' famous in antiquity for their curative qualities. There is now but a poor building on the old site, but the water is said to retain all the properties which made it so famous of yore—it bubbles up quite hot. A trackway winds by the lake-side, sometimes quite close, at others climbing to the hill-slopes. This track is much used by Bedouin horsemen going to or returning from Moab, which they reach by a bridge over the Jordan. It is a picturesque sight to see these horsemen in their gay headdress, and with their tall spears, with the ostrich tuft, wandering through the rich vegetation, like children at play. Bedouin rejoice in wild flowers; they would rush off the track and career wildly over those flowery and grassy slopes, snatching handfuls of flowers on their way.

The edge of the lake is here rich in rush and water-grasses; and now for the first time I see the oleander,

The Sea of Galilee

with its bright pink flower, fringing the shore—a real ‘willow by the watercourse.’

‘All through the summer night
Those blossoms red and bright
Spread their soft breasts, unheeding, to the breeze.’¹

It loves water, and its roots spread down under the surface. Every now and then bits of old masonry—old bridges, I think, over tiny streams coming down from the hills—give points of effect to the landscape. The hills on the western side become gentler as we pass on south; those on the eastern banks are gentler also, and, no longer barren, have grass and forests on their side, while marshy meadows are at their feet. The lake now passes out quite like many a Scottish or Cumberland stream—a broad reach of quiet water gliding between banks of earth—with flat meadows on either hand.

The character of the lake is very different as we leave Tiberias and go northwards. Near Tiberias the hills also fall back, and leave a small plain, broken by knolls, on some of which, at the edge of the lake, the castle and town are built. The town is picturesque, but very ruinous; its walls rent and torn by shocks of earthquake, which here are very frequent. Hereabouts there is a beach composed of small pebbles and millions of shells, which form ridges a few yards

¹ *The Christian Year.*

The Sea of Galilee

in width, with varying elevations, telling that the sea has had different levels. Here, too, are to be found a few fragments of the palaces and temples which existed on its shores in the time of our Lord, but no ruins of any importance. Hard by, on the hill-slope, I



RUINS NEAR TIBERIAS.

found in the tangled undergrowth of grass, thistle, and bramble, ruins of a building of some size : fallen columns in disorder—none erect, and only one with a capital ; many more were hidden in the rank growth. In wandering about I found, too, fragments of buildings extending quite up the hill-slope, and the Bedouin

The Sea of Galilee

shepherd with whom I made friends¹ told me that many other ruins similar to those I have sketched were existing on the slopes around. It is, however, no easy task to explore; the unequal ground, with its grass and thistles, renders it difficult, and many a tumble I had into holes, getting well pricked with thorns in these antiquarian rambles.

While at Tiberias, I may as well mention some unique effects I there saw. It is night; I am sitting outside my tent—camp-fire near—my men slumbering around, when, looking towards Hermon, I see a great arch, in faint prismatic tones, span the lake from shore to shore. The night is cloudy; the moon, nearly full, at my back. A pale ghost of Hermon I can see under the arch, the snow making itself felt; all the rest is in tones of silvery grey; the hills shadowy, and all—*everything*—reflected in the still lake. This weird apparition of the night is a lunar rainbow.

All night long Jews had been passing to the hot wells to bathe before the Passover. Next day there was again a crowd; but I noticed the women and children went in the daylight, the men at night. Boats, too, brought their loads; and the beach and road were lively all day with the gay throng, the women often forming themselves into a ring, dancing and chanting some Hebrew song. A wealthy old Jew passed often; preceded by one servant, he leaned on the arm of

¹ See *Letters to my Children from the Holy Land*.

The Sea of Galilee

another, who carried an umbrella over his head. Girls often stopped to giggle at the stranger and his strange work, and they would hold up the ends of their veils to shelter their heads as they watched me and my drawing, for the heat was now very oppressive.

Another effect. It is near sunset, and I am waiting—outline ready—for the sunset flush on the eastern hills. The red light flushes on their crests, getting stronger and stronger, like a maiden's blush; rosy clouds are floating gently in the sky. The lower slopes of the hills are passing into shade as they fall into the lake, from which a faint cold mist begins to rise; when, breaking the line of the rosy hills, rises the bright light of the full moon—the Paschal moon! While overpowered by this revelation of beauty, my ears are assailed by a din of horn and trumpet, as the Jewish priests welcome their feast.

Another scene, and it again is night: the moon high up, shedding down so strong a light that it is impossible to sleep. I can see to read, to sketch, to make written notes—a night of peace ever to be remembered and recalled by the sketch which now meets my eyes as I write.

I have before spoken of the sudden changes the lake is subject to. I witnessed one from the shore. One Sunday, after spending the morning in my tent reading my Bible, I went for a stroll. The sun was very hot as I wandered on past the town, but soon

The Sea of Galilee

a high wind began to raise the dust. This wind was cold, and came from the north-west. I decided to rest and shelter. When I turned round to look back at the lake, I was startled by the change: its gentle ripples had given place to waves—waves with white crests—veritable sea-horses. A fierce light struck full on Tiberias, which was seen against a background of deep purple sea and still darker hill. The one palm tree near lashed over like a reed; a pelting shower of rain swept over land and sea. So large, so heavy was the rain that I could see the splash even on the stormy waves, while again and again came a shrieking gust which struck the surface of the lake and swept the water up into the air. All was wild confusion, grand and terrible. I know not how long I remained under my shelter. I know I then realised what sort of storm it was that caused that despairing cry, ‘Master, we perish!’ When I did get back to my tent it was all confusion—ripped and blown down, many things broken and scattered; and some time was passed in trying to repair damages. The evening was calm.

After passing the town of Tiberias northwards the shores of Galilee Lake change again: there are fewer shells; it is now a shingly beach; then some black basaltic cliffs come close to the verge of the water—upright cliffs with great fallen masses stretching out into the water (here, if anywhere, is the resemblance

The Sea of Galilee

to Derwentwater so much spoken of). Fine 'foreground' subjects might be painted here, and they would so resemble our own Scotch loch-shores that any name might be given them—in fact, hereabouts there was no especial *Eastern* character. As we go on, the path leaves the lake shore (which now becomes swampy at the foot of higher cliffs), and winds up the cliff, partly cut, partly worn deep by the traffic of ages, for from the lie of the ground I do not think there could have been any other road. The warm colours of the cliffs are here very fine in white, yellow, and pale reds. A ruined tower, with a jungle of papyrus, oleander, willow, and mimosa, now make a thicket on the shore below the road. This spot is the supposed Dalmanutha of the Gospels. A very fine bit of cliff succeeds, and then the road descends sharply to El Medgel (Magdala), a poor scattered hamlet, a ruined tower of old masonry (from which it got probably its name—Magdala, Migdol, 'watch-tower'). Here on the roofs of these poor houses the people had built themselves arbours or booths of palm branches and oleander boughs. The hot weather had come, and El Medgel must be a furnace under that cliff.

Afterwards commences the flatter Land of Genesareth. Small burns cross our path; a large thorn tree grows near. We are now on the track of that great caravan road which passed hence to

The Sea of Galilee

Damascus, Bagdad, Nineveh; and here I come upon a large caravan of camels, bringing silks and other produce from Damascus to Jerusalem, recalling instantly that somewhere hereabout sat Matthew, the 'tax-collector,' gathering the Roman tax from the caravans of that time. Oleander bushes are in great profusion, larger and fuller in blossom than those at the southern end—not now growing only at the water's edge, but spreading over the plain, and showing how swampy the soil is. The old road here is lost; various tracks lead through the thickets of brush and briar. The edge of the lake is swampy; and there are bits of delicious shingle, flat sand and shell running out into the lake. Herds of oxen stand in the shallow water; goats and sheep lie on the shingle. These oxen I found belonged to Bedouin, whose camp I afterwards visited; and every day, while on the plain, I saw them drive great herds of oxen to the lake to drink.

We wend our way through thickets of brushwood to the more open plain. Patches of corn now meet the eye, and show that the land is fertile, for the crop is good; but as for population, you see none. There is no lack of water on this plain, for I had frequently to cross burns rushing down from the hills, and the deep cuttings show what a great amount comes down. Though the Plain of Gennesareth is a small one, yet the hills fall back with a semicircular sweep—more here than at any other part of the lake. It is fairly

The Sea of Galilee

level; in the centre a mass of giant thistles, which, before you come to Khan Minyeh, are mingled with wild yellow flowers. The thistles and the burns made the plain difficult of exploration. I often got the Bedouin to cut a passage with their hatchets through the thistles when I wished to get to particular points. Only once did I find ruined masonry, and then close by was a huge 'nether' millstone, surrounded by flowers and thistles. The latter are so huge that I often walked with hands clasped over head, that my arms might shield my eyes and face. In the evenings one had no lack of occupation, what with writing up one's notes, and picking the thorns out of one's arms and legs!

Near Khan Minyeh comes a change again: the shores of the lake are one great marsh—a mass of papyrus, the haunt of wild fowl—the shallow creeks abounding in fish which are easily caught. At the northern extremity of the marsh rises a cliff, rich in warm colour; at its base is Ain-el-Tin, 'the fountain of the fig.' The water gushes out quite at the base of the cliff, and flows into the lake, increasing the swamp. There is a heap of Roman masonry close to the fountain: it looked as if it had been the base of some arch or pillar. Khan Minyeh, the building close by, I concluded to be of Saracenic times, though probably built on a more ancient ruin. The 'road' now leads over this cliff: it is narrow, deep cut into

The Sea of Galilee

the rock ; and I feel convinced that it is not really a 'road,' but the remains of an aqueduct. I examined the whole of it with great care : its sides some distance up from the floor are worn so smooth and show such undeniable proof of water action that I feel sure Sir Charles Wilson is right in saying that this so-called 'road' was a great water-work ; it winds round the hill to where a strong spring issues. The existence of this aqueduct tended to confirm me in my opinion that hereabouts was the site of Capernaum.

Another expedition was to Wady Hamâm, 'the valley of doves.' At the head of the valley stood Beth-arbel (Hos. x. 14). Here we have indeed grand cliffs, perpendicular on the right hand, full of caves near their summit—caves whence the Galilean 'robbers' or 'patriots' issued to wage war with Herod, who finally defeated them by the expedient of lowering his soldiery in cages over the summit, as we can read in the pages of Josephus. It made me quite giddy to look at the thread-like tracks which led to the holes. Wady Hamâm gets its name now from the multitudes of pigeons which live in the cliffs—descendants of those 'doves' which were here bred for the Temple sacrifices in the time of our Lord ; but its denizens now are not all so peaceful. I never saw so many eagles in my life ; vultures I had seen in plenty on the hills—never so many as here, circling round the tops of the cliffs.



SITE OF CAPERNAVUM.

(The distant mountain is the Kurn Hattin.)

The Sea of Galilee

A small stream runs through the glen below, through a wild tangle of undergrowth and tree; the rocky pools were fine, and tempting to an artist. But this was not quite the place for quiet work, for as I sketched a fine bit of foreground, rock and precipitous cliff, a large leopard crept on to one of the stones which formed my immediate foreground, and surveyed me with a puzzled look. He did not know the genus artist. Rashly I fired at him with my revolver, but he took no notice of the insult. The echoes of my shot were strange, and brought out clouds of birds—a huge eagle rising from a thicket close to me, where I afterwards found he had been feeding on a stork. A little further up the glen two beasts, which my men said were panthers, jumped out from some bushes close to where I stood. Take it for all in all, this gorge is the grandest I have seen in Palestine, abounding in savage beauty. If it were as near as Glencoe, we should often find the white umbrella of the artist.

This leads me to say that, in spite of all that has been written of Palestine, Palestine scenery is but little known. My experience, spread over years, is that travellers pass at too great a speed through the country, and, what is even worse, they go in company, and the talk of friends prevents that resolute and quiet study which is so necessary if we wish to get any grip of scenery or subject. I consider too that

The Sea of Galilee

the Holy Land has never been painted as it deserves to be. David Roberts sketched it, and got some charming subjects; but look at any of them: his foregrounds are always his own camp people—their doings; the landscape is but thrown in; everything is sacrificed to the picturesque and picture-making of that day—an art he understood to perfection. In these later days the photograph has gone over a good deal of the land; and I say without hesitation that the photographs are a libel on the landscape. Dean Stanley often talked this matter over with me; and through his influence, when the last expedition of the Palestine Fund went to Moab, suggestions were given to the officers: 'Photograph all the ruins, any buildings you like—leave the landscape alone.' Why do I say photographs of Palestine landscape are a libel? So much of the beauty there depends on its unique colour—so pale, so pure—and on its intense light also. Those cliffs which are pale yellow and pale vermilion come out dark in the photograph. Its ruins, even of yellow sandstone, appear dark. Owing to the intense light, shadows look black, dense, and cold, instead of being transparent, full of reflected light and detail. It is a scandal in these days to look at an illustrated Bible, and see the worn-out blocks called Tabor, or anything else you like, which have no earthly resemblance to the place, and which must have been drawn by men who had never visited the land. Figure-

The Sea of Galilee

painters are more truthful, for they do procure real dresses, and then, by putting models into them, reproduce in a wonderful way a truthful resemblance to the people of the land.

In olden time the road to Cana of Galilee led through this pass of Wady Hamâm; it leads also to Kurn Hattin, the scene of that last great fight with Crusader and Saracen, and where after a three days' struggle the champions of the Cross were finally defeated by Saladin. Hattin is the traditional site of the Sermon on the Mount. I think there are good reasons for accepting the tradition. It was near enough to the cities of the seashore, and had space enough for the multitude. The mount or hill rises from a small plain, which was being ploughed by oxen as I halted to sketch. There is no other mountain which is separate near: all the other hills are ridges running one into the other. From the summit a good view of Galilee can be had.

The trying climate of the Plain of Gennesareth—the great heat by day, and the damp mists at night—joined with hard study, at length so told upon my strength that with great regret I was forced to leave the shores of Galilee. I was so weak at last from fever that I had to be lifted on my horse, and realised in my own person the experience of the fever-stricken sufferer at Capernaum. I got to the hills, that I might escape the malarious air; but, though I painted on for some time, all real strength had gone. So the last place I

The Sea of Galilee

really studied in Palestine was the Sea of Galilee—as Dean Stanley has said, ‘the most sacred sheet of water that this earth contains.’ I rejoiced that I had been enabled to spend so much time on its shores, and that my sojourn there brought me a collection of drawings which to this hour vividly recall its beauty and its present desolation.



RUINS BY THE SOUTH END OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

XV

NEW LIGHTS ON ANCIENT WAYS

EVERY child in England is familiar with the postman ; his quick step, his sharp ring or rat-tat at our doors, is eagerly waited for. What a messenger of joy or sadness he often is ! And the missives may tell of death, total loss of fortune, or they may bring good news. He has to deal them out impartially. In Cairo I was often amused to hear the knock of the Egyptian postman ; it is quite like that of the English one. Our postmen go on horseback, on bicycles, but chiefly on foot ; but in the East they often go on camels. The one my sketch represents was the Sinai postman. I met him in the desert, mounted on a swift dromedary. He went past me like a flash, calling out in Arabic as he rushed past, ‘Peace be with you.’ I had hardly time to reply, ‘On you be peace.’ He was soon out of sight. He was carrying letters from Cairo to the convent of Mount Sinai ; and he is not allowed to halt by the way, unless stopped by weather. Unarmed, he is rarely if ever

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assailed, for all Arabs respect his mission ; only in time of war is there any danger.

Think what a solitary ride this man has to make, and remember it is not always fine weather, as in the picture. Sometimes there are heavy rains. What he does then I cannot think, for the camel's foot, though admirably adapted for sand or for stony places, is quite unsuited to wet ground ; he dreads it, and becomes as nervous as a horse is when he is on the ice. And, moreover, the camel is a very obstinate animal ; if he makes up his mind not to do anything, it is most difficult to make him. I never saw but one camel who seemed fond of his master.

Then there is the cold frost at night, and, worst of all, the dreaded Kamseen, or hot wind, which, tearing over the flat portion of the desert, drives up the sand and gravel till the whole air is thick. At such times the camel refuses point blank to proceed, but lies down and groans in misery.

When this man arrives at the convent he has a long rest, sleeping for days, also resting his camel. The postman from Bagdad to Damascus has a still longer ride. These men are often ill for days, and their camels require quite a month to recover. People generally have an idea that a camel can go any number of days without water : the fact is, three days tries them very much ; they can go six days, but death is usually then the result. I rode one once for three days without

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water, and when we reached an oasis, where there was a spring, I think he was quite an hour drinking.

Unlike men, these animals are never deceived by the mirage, that strange and wonderful effect so often seen in the desert, which sometimes so resembles quiet



THE SINAI POSTMAN.

lakes that men find it almost impossible to believe that only sand exists.

You may notice that I say camel, and once dromedary, as if they were the same sort of animal. Yes, so they are: the camel is for heavy burdens—he is the cart-horse, so to speak—while the dromedary is the hack or hunter. Another thing, please remember

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that the Arabian camel or dromedary has *not* two humps, he has but one; it is only the Asian or Bactrian camel that has two humps.

The Prophet Job, an old man, speaks in the text of a postman or courier. He says, 'My days are swifter than a post.' Young people are often apt to say, 'How long the days are!' Old people sorrowfully confess that time flies. Rejoice in your youth, but also see that your time is properly used and employed. When you are engaged on any business, imitate the Sinai postman, call out a civil Good day to your friends, but do not stop on your way, do not waste your time, press on with your work.

Postmen were often runners on foot. Jer. li. 31 says of Babylon that 'one post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another.' Even now in India runners are employed either to carry a single letter, which they usually carry in a cleft stick, held aloft that people may see they are carrying news, or to take a verbal message. Joab sent two runners to King David to tell the king of the victory over Absalom; and King Hezekiah wrote letters and sent them by posts to all the children of Israel, commanding them to return to the Lord their God. And we also read in Esth. viii. 14 that from Shushan the palace letters were sent out to all the provinces, and 'the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment.'

Our own king's messengers have to take especial letters to his ministers or ambassadors in foreign lands. They too have to press on night and day until they deliver their letters or despatches.

The word tents tells of an Eastern land ; tells, too, of a time reaching back to the very beginning of human habitations. We read of Cain that ' he builded a city,' and we read also of Jabal, ' who dwelt in tents.' Even in those early days there was a sharp division between the craftsmen and the agriculturists ; that division exists still, but only in Eastern lands.

At this moment hundreds of thousands of people live only in tents, and, indeed, despise the dwellers in houses. It is quite curious to see how the Bedouin despise house-dwellers ; it comes principally from the habits of the people, who are born wanderers, and whose wealth consists of flocks and herds. Born robbers, too, they take what they want from the towns-people ; rarely do they cultivate any corn, relying on the barter of their flocks or their raids upon villages for the needed grain. It has been so from the earliest ages ; when the pasturages in one region are exhausted by their flocks, they move off to others, careless, indeed, as to who the owners of the lands are. I have often seen the migration of Bedouin tribes coming like locusts on the fresh crops, and eating all up.

The tents these people live in are not like those

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used by Europeans or by soldiers, which are commonly called 'bell tents,' their shape suggesting the word.

The practical wisdom of the ancients invented quite a different sort of tent, both in shape and colour. The tents of Westerns are white, those of Easterns are black or brown. The Song of Sol. i. 5 says of them : ' I am black, but comely, . . . as the tents of Kedar.' Made of goat or camel hair, they are quite impervious to rain ; their low shape enables them to resist wind, and they are also easily capable of enlargement. Isa. liv. 2 says : ' Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations : spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.' Here the prophet, for the sake of the lesson he wishes to teach, accurately describes the Eastern tent.

Sometimes Arab tents are arranged in circles, the spaces between being filled in with thorn bushes, the animals being inside the circle. In the Bible this sort of camp is called ' Hazerim ' ; in the Authorised Version the word is translated ' towns ' ; in the Revised Version the word is more truly rendered ' encampments ' (see Gen. xxv. 16).

This custom of pitching the camp in a circle was a common one with people living in a half-civilised state. Goths and Saxons pitched their waggons in a circle, placing their cattle inside the waggons : hence the origin of our ' village greens ' ; the ' green ' was the



ARAB TENTS.

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space enclosed by the waggons. In Africa to-day we often read of our settlers being in 'laager'; this is the same idea—waggonns are arranged in a circle with the animals and people inside.

The sheykh's tent is larger than the others; it is, moreover, the 'guest' tent. A spear standing erect in the ground marks it out, and also it is always in the most prominent position, for the chief must be the first to welcome friend or receive enemy. In all these tents a curtain runs across, say two-thirds, of the space. This curtain does not quite reach the roof; the further and smaller portion is that for women, the outer and larger for men. Behind this curtain or 'door' the women sit; they can listen to the conversation of the men while they themselves are unseen. Probably it was behind this curtain that Sarah overheard Abraham when he conversed with the angels (Gen. xviii. 9, 10). I have often sat in Bedouin tents talking to the men, and have heard the suppressed laughter of the women behind the curtain, or seen a bright eye applied to a hole in the curtain, showing that the women were desirous of getting a peep at the stranger.

The tents are not always arranged in circles, but sometimes in rows. This was, I think, the custom of the Israelites, for in Num. xxiv. 5, 6 Balaam speaks of the tents as being 'spread forth as gardens by the river's side.'

Bedouin do not like to camp in the gorges of the

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hills, because rain storms are frequent, and whenever rain comes it comes in torrents, and, owing to the want of vegetation, the floods pour off the steep hillsides at once, a flood being the result. The storm water rushes through the wadies, converting them in a moment into resistless torrents. Most of the Sinai wadies give proofs of this, for palm trees and lumps of rocks are found piled high up the sides, showing how resistless was the force and volume of water. The Rev. Francis Holland, a great and frequent traveller in the desert, told me he once saw a whole encampment of Bedouin—tents, camels, men, and women—swept away. He happened to be looking up a wady, and saw the storm water coming down. He succeeded in scrambling to a cliff, while to his horror the whole encampment was carried away. It afterwards was found that rain had fallen on Gebel Serbal, some miles away, and this was the storm water rushing to the sea.

The poet says :

‘They fold their tents like the Arabs, and silently steal away.’

It was a never-failing source of surprise to find how quickly Arabs would strike their tents and disappear, sinking, one might almost say, into the ground. If the tribe is rich in sheep, they make a hedge round the tents. This hedge is composed of prickly bushes and stems of trees, and behind this the flock is safe at night.

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In cold weather a fire is lighted inside the tent, and there being of course no chimney, the smoke escapes as best it can. It is very trying to sit in a tent then, though the Arabs appear not to be affected by it. On the tent-poles inside the tent are hung the water-bottles or skins. In Ps. cxix. 83 we read: 'I am become like a bottle in the smoke.' These skin-bottles, hung up as I have said, would soon shrivel and crack, and be useless for either water or wine. Old bottles were often patched, as we see in Josh. ix. 4; for we read of bottles 'old, and rent, and bound up.' It is common now to see the Bedouin at work trying to patch up old bottles; one I used in the desert is sewn up and patched in more than one place.

Look at these tents, and then remember that Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, tells us that he worked at tent-making (Acts xviii. 2, 3). It was at Corinth that Aquila and his wife Priscilla found refuge, and they being of the same occupation, Paul lodged with them. More than once in the East have I seen tent-makers at their work. You may say the work is not very dignified; it certainly is hard, and the fingers get worn and blackened by the black dye; but Paul proudly says 'his own hands' ministered to his own wants. No wonder if the dainty Corinthians looked with contempt on a teacher whose hands were black with toil. The idea that these humble men were the agents to tell people of God, of salvation by Christ,

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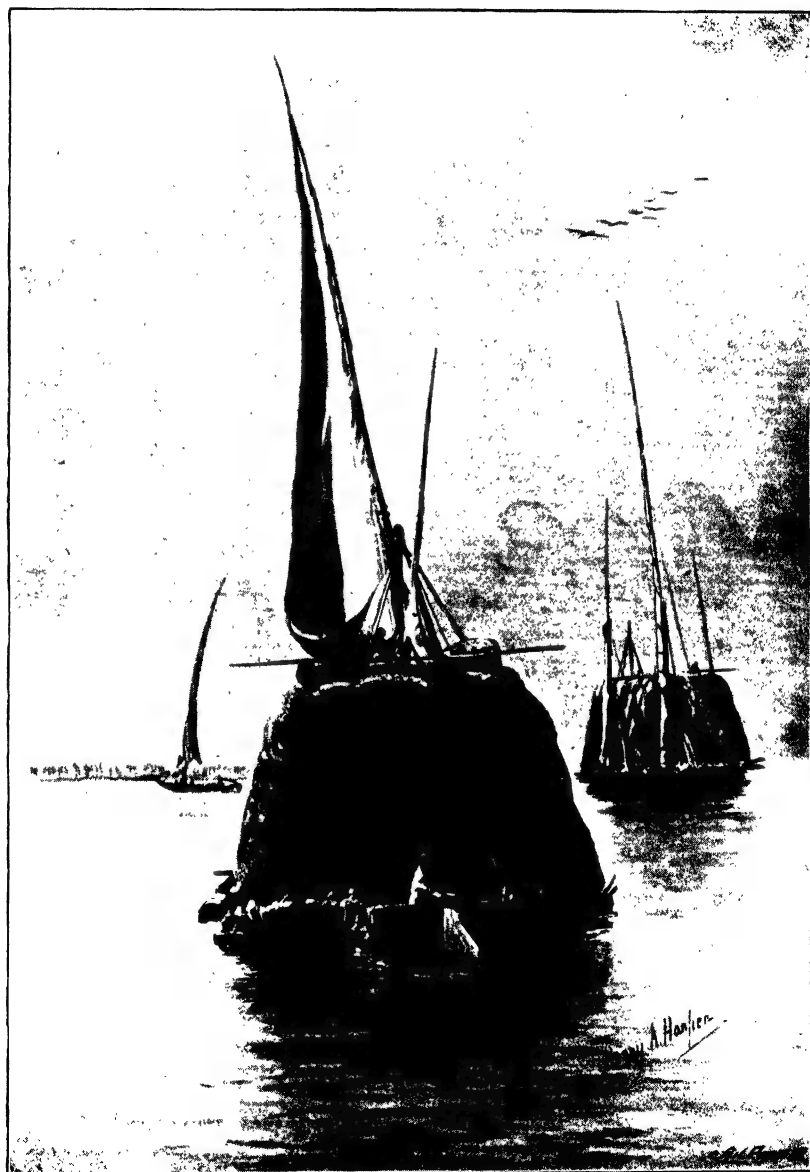
must have seemed inadequate ; the mass of corruption and ignorance was so great, the agents for reformation so feeble. Let us learn from this never to despise humble beginnings. I have often wondered, when I have watched tent-makers in the East, if I should have recognised in Paul, the tent-maker, the divinely appointed agent. And then my thoughts would wander to Carey, the Northamptonshire shoemaker, to John Bunyan, the tinker, and to a host of humble-minded men whose efforts have been so blessed.

Strange boats these are—are they not ? I am sure you cannot for a moment imagine them English, and I am equally certain you cannot guess what their cargo is. They are native boats on the River Nile, which, as you know, is the great river of Egypt—in fact, there would be no Egypt were it not for the Nile.

This great stream fertilises the whole land, first by overflowing the low ground which is called the Delta. Then in the higher portions there are canals, which bring water into the fields, and by primitive means the water is raised, and so the whole land is irrigated.

These native boats are called *nuggers*, and their cargo is *teben*, which is chopped straw.

When I looked at these boats, or at old Cairo saw great heaps of *teben* in the market-place, my thoughts



TEBEN BOATS ON THE NILE.

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went a long, long way back into the past. Look in your Bible at Exodus, 5th chapter, 7th to 12th verses. The Israelites had lost the favour of the reigning Pharaoh. He commanded that they should be made slaves, and as the most crushing labour he could put them to, he compelled them to make bricks and build treasure or store cities for the king. In Egypt bricks are not baked by fire in kilns, as with us, but are dried by the hot beams of the sun, which in that land shines with great power. I have been in Egypt when it was one hundred and forty degrees in the sun. So hot is it that men often die of sunstroke. And be sure the sufferings of the Israelites were very great, and doubtless thousands of the poor people died; which was just what this cruel king wished for. He said he was afraid of their great numbers. You remember also that he ordered that all the male infants were to be slain.

Well, in making these bricks the people had to use mud, for there was no clay. Straw was mixed with the mud to make it cohesive. The Bible says straw was used; but the word in Hebrew should be translated chopped straw, that would give the true meaning of the word. It is strange that the old Hebrew word is *teven*, while the Egyptian of to-day calls it in Arabic *tben*, so nearly alike in sound and spelling are the two languages in this instance. The poor Israelites complained to the taskmasters of

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their hard and killing work, and asked for some respite ; but in anger the king said, 'No! you are idle. You shall work now, for I won't give you any "chopped straw" to mix with the mud. Go out and gather "straw" for yourselves.' And the Bible goes on to tell how the people were scattered about all over the Land of Egypt trying to gather 'straw' for themselves. And what made the order more cruel was that harvest had long been over, and so it would only be the straw that had dropped by the way that they would find. By-and-by we shall see that they gathered other things too. And yet another point in the cruel order was that the Israelites were to make just as many bricks as if chopped straw had been given to them.

In that Land of Goshen I saw many ruins of cities built of these bricks of Nile mud. The land is most fertile still ; it swarms with life, human and animal. Rich crops of corn were there, with multitudes of fellahin (agricultural labourers) gathering them in. Yet hard by was the desert, bare and dry, in the hollows of which were lagoons (pools of water), grass, rushes, and stunted bushes, and again, fields of grain. There I pictured to myself, instead of the poor fellahin, the still poorer Israelites gathering the 'straw,' making the bricks, and all under the burning sun.

Some few years ago a clever explorer, a most gifted man, was with a host of natives digging in this very province of Egypt, and discovered the ruins of Pithom,

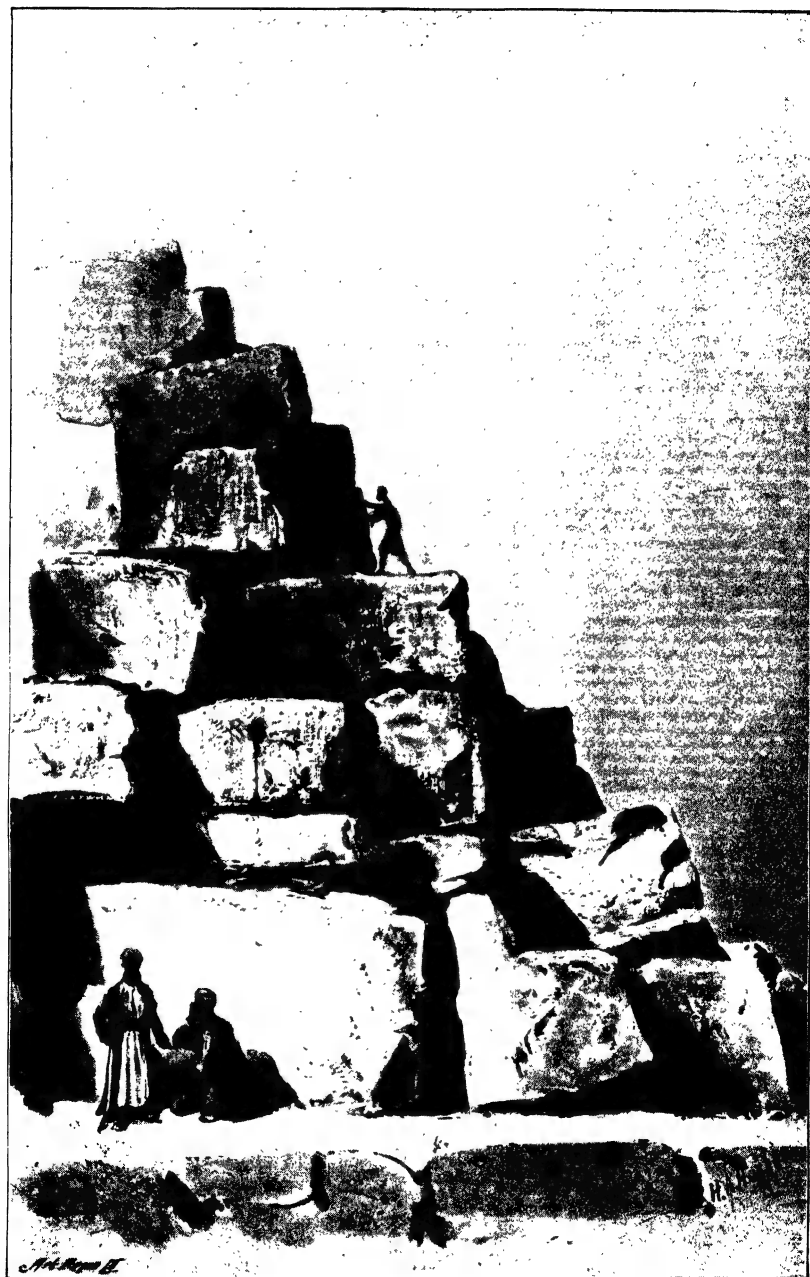
one of the very cities the Bible says the poor Israelites had to build. He found many great store chambers for corn. They were built of sun-dried bricks, some of which had the Egyptian word Pi Tum, or Pithom, written on them. But, more wonderful still, on examining these walls, the lower courses of bricks were found to be made with chopped straw and mud ; then, above these, there were layers of bricks several feet high with 'long straws,' bits of sticks, fragments of rushes, weeds, and odds and ends—anything and everything, in short, that would help to bind mud together. This was the time when the poor Israelites were scattered abroad gathering anything they could to help them in their crushing tasks. The upper courses of bricks had nothing but mud. The slaves had exhausted and picked up every scrap of material which would bind the mud. Not a scrap of straw, or rush, or weed, was left. What a picture of grinding slavery ! What lives had been sacrificed before they came to this !

The Hebrew for long straw is in our Bible translated stubble. You never see it now in Egypt, but *teben* you often see ; mixed with barley it is used for feeding cattle, as with the Arabs of Palestine, for oats are not used. In ancient Egypt oats were quite unknown. *Teben* is really chaff and crushed straw. It is got by the treading of oxen over the threshing-floors ; when the oxen have trodden out the grain, the mass is thrown up into the air by men with long wooden forks, and

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the grain being heavier falls to the ground. The straw is blown aside, afterwards to be gathered into heaps, and then brought down the river on these boats. Sometimes two boats are fastened together with planks, and the chopped straw piled up on them. So these strange boats, with their stranger cargoes, of to-day recall to our minds the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt, and an old custom retained proves the truth of God's Word.

Standing at one of the angles of the Great Pyramid, I noticed on the ground a small piece of rock of a different colour from the large stones of which the great tomb is composed. I picked it up, and found it to be dorite with some strange lines across the surface. I placed it in my pocket and went on; by-and-by, in a pit near, and down which I had scrambled, I found a stone weight, somewhat chipped. It had been rounded at the top, and was flat at the base. These treasures I showed the same day to a most learned Egyptologist. Said he, 'Your bit of rock is indeed a great find. Those ancient Egyptians, with that wonderful knowledge which they possessed, knew that the rock of which they were about to build the Great Pyramid was liable to fracture (being limestone), so they formed the foundation stones at the angles of dorite; and the strange marks you notice are saw-marks, and the green tint shows that the old saw was made of some sort of hardened



A CORNER OF THE GREAT PYRAMID.

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bronze, for the colour is verdigris ; and your weight is a very ancient one.' So see what I had gained by a little observation.

Fired by this, another day I scrambled down an old mummy pit, and there I found some small cup-like pieces of red pottery. These I of course showed to my friend, who told me that they were the oldest known pottery in the world. No one was quite positive what their use was. I often hunted, and found nearly a dozen, but only two or three were perfect.

In the British Museum there is an ancient Babylonian weight of green dorite, an official standard weight 2500 B.C., and used for weighing silver ; probably the sort of weight Abraham used when he weighed out the silver to Ephron the Hittite.

I shall proceed to tell you of a few facts I know in connection with Jerusalem. 'Fragments?' Yes ; but I hope, none the less, that they will interest you. The Bible tells us that when David first, and then Solomon, wished to build a temple to the Lord, they sent to a king who lived some distance away on the sea-coast, to ask him to lend them a clever master builder, or, as we should now call him, an architect. The king promised and did send a man. Read over the fifth chapter of 1 Kings, and also 2 Chron., second chapter, especially the thirteenth and fourteenth verses, and you will see who that man was. Long ages have passed since that day, but some years ago the officers of the

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Palestine Exploration Fund dug a deep shaft outside the wall at Jerusalem, to see if they could find the foundations of the wall. After going down over eighty feet, they did find them. Then they drove a tunnel along the face of the wall, finding very big stones all along. But what sorely puzzled them were some strange marks in red paint on the surface of the stones. These marks must have been put on with too full a brush, or the painter's hand shook, for there were a few splashes or drops of paint on some of the stones. Learned men skilled in languages have decided that these red marks are directions from the master builder where the stones were to be placed, and that the language was Phœnician. Read your Bible passage again, and you will see that the king who sent the man was King of Tyre, and Tyre was a Phœnician city. Here is a beautiful illustration of the truth of the Bible, and it had been buried thousands of years—the great stones, the costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundations.

Then the Bible goes on to say (1 Kings vi. 7) that no 'tool of iron' was heard while the Temple was building. Well, that seems very strange, does it not? When I was visiting Cairo the workmen were building a large house close to where I lodged, and ever so early in the morning I was aroused by the terrible click-click of the hammers and tools the workmen were using. And yet—do you know?—we can prove that the Bible

account is true. When the officers of whom I have told you got to the bottom of the great shaft, they found at the base of the wall a layer of black earth—mould, gardeners call it; it extended along the base of the wall. This earth was most carefully sifted, and not a single chip of stone was found in it. This proved that the stones had been so carefully prepared in the quarry that no chipping was necessary; while at the base of the wall in the Cairo house there were thousands of little stone chips.

Another story well illustrates my point. A poor woman in Egypt was walking over some mounds of rubbish which mark the site of an ancient city—and here, by the way, let me tell you that until you have visited the East, you can have but little idea of the great numbers and vast size of these mounds—well, as this woman walked she noticed a bit of pottery, and all these mounds are covered with bits of pottery; but this fragment seemed to have some writing on it, so she picked it up, a small square bit about the size of the palm of your hand. Soon after, a traveller in his boat stopped for the night on the river bank, not far away from her village. The woman took the fragment, and the traveller bought it; probably the good price she got for it induced her and others to continue the search. Other bits were found and sold to other travellers, who, when they returned to Cairo, showed these strange fragments to learned men, who very soon saw that they

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were in a different language from that of old Egypt. Inquiries were set on foot, and at once several *savans* started for the place, and began to dig, and lo! a royal library was found, and the celebrated Tel-el-Amarna tablets were brought to light.

In this manner, in the year 1887, about one hundred and eighty miles from Cairo, and dating from about 1480 B.C., were these tablets, written by old-world Amorites, Phœnicians, Philistines, Babylonians, and Assyrians, found.

Let us glance at some of the things they say. They mention a Jahir, King of Gezer, a Jabin, King of Hazor, Adonizedek, King of Jerusalem—contemporaries of Joshua. The taking of Jericho is mentioned. One governor tells of being attacked on the one side by Hittites, and also that the 'Abiri' (Hebrews), 'desert people,' are attacking him from the hill country! Some letters were written after the defeat at Ajalon. They are thought to have been written from Makkedah, where the kings hid in a cave; the wives of the kings are said to be trying to reach Gaza.

One letter is from a Queen Basmath ('sweet'). She, poor thing, relates that she is very tired, having travelled sixty miles on foot; she went northwards. Several letters relate that the Egyptian troops had been withdrawn before the 'Abiri' attacked these inhabitants. There are letters from Babylon, speaking of sending chariots, gold, and precious stones. One letter from Assyria tells of gold 'in plenty,' and 'molten silver.'

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Now turn to Josh. ii. and see how Rahab, who hid the spies sent by Joshua, hung a scarlet thread from her window. Scarlet was a Tyrian dye used in Babylonia. In chapter vii. 21, in the spoils of Jericho, two hundred shekels of silver, a wedge of gold fifty shekels weight, also a Babylonish garment, were found by Achan; and for long years some critics have dared to say these accounts of the Book of Joshua could not be true, because, forsooth, these very wise men said there was no intercourse at such an early date between Egypt, Babylonia, and the Land of Canaan! But these tablets—documents of a religious character—prove that before the time of Moses a great and powerful civilisation and literature existed amongst the Canaanites. The Bible has been proved true by these tablets.

Quite recently Professor Flinders Petrie has made a discovery of great importance in Upper Egypt. A large block of stone weighing five tons was found built *face inwards* into a wall. On being removed, the covered face was found thickly covered with inscriptions, and in the inscription 'the Israelites' are especially mentioned. This is the first time an Egyptian inscription calls 'the Israelites' by their proper name.

English archæologists have gained a partial victory, for the Egyptian Government has consented to modify their scheme for storing the flood waters of the Nile. Having known Philæ for many years, and having

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painted several views of the ruins, perhaps a few words from an artist who differs from the common opinions may not be out of place.

Why does the Ministry of Public Works in Egypt propose this Assouan dam? There is a great and pressing danger that the water-supply of Egypt may fail or fall short of requirements.

Owing to English occupation, the forced *corvée* is abolished. The corbash and torture have followed suit. Hence the people do not die as rapidly as they did formerly. More land is being brought under cultivation; more land requires more water.

The opponents of the scheme, which was propounded by the most celebrated of the English and Italian experts, are willing to grant that a dam must be made; but they say, 'Why make it at Philæ? why not somewhere else?'

Some years ago, while up the Nile, I was often met with the remark, 'The dam could easily be made at Gebel Silsilis'; in ignorance of the fact that there the rock is sandstone—soft, friable—and that it is impossible to construct a dam on an insecure foundation. If it were constructed there, the probability is that the first high Nile would sweep the whole barrier away like a rope of sand.

I asked the dragoman to anchor my boat at Girgeh, under a high bank where years before I had secured a good picture. The river seemed strangely altered.

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I failed to make out the old familiar landmarks, and yet I thought I was near my point. I asked the dragoman, 'When shall we come to anchor at Girgeh?' With a broad grin he said, 'There's Girgeh!' pointing to some minaret towers far inland. Then I was told that the year before the river had made a new bed, and left Girgeh far inland! It may have gone back again, for aught I know.

Even near Luxor the river seems as if it were trying to make out a new course, *behind* Luxor, and so might forsake the bed it now runs in between Luxor and Thebes. Some writers think that in ancient times the river did not run *between* the two places, and that it ran behind or eastwards of the Luxor temples.

The mighty river is no child to be easily controlled, and all experts agree that Assouan is the only possible place for a dam. The rock there is granite, the country behind absolutely sterile—a mass of rock, gravel, or sand.

People waxed eloquent as to the fate of the two hundred or so families living at Shellal, who would be displaced and have to seek new homes if the dam were made at Philæ. Did they think of the two millions of souls who might die for want of water? For such is the estimate given by those authorities in Egypt who are most conversant with the needs of the people. What would France then say—France who, dog-in-the-

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manger-like, has tried to thwart and embarrass every English scheme? '*Perfide*,' indeed, would they call us, if, taking Egypt under our control, we allowed its people to lack water.

Philæ is an island, 417 yards long, 135 yards wide. The name comes as a corruption of the Egyptian word *Pilak*; the word means 'frontier.' Strabo says of it, 'A little above the cataract is Philæ, a common settlement.'

The principal building was commenced by Ptolemy Philadelphus; then the two Cleopatras had their part. Many of the sculptures are of the later epoch of the Roman emperors—Augustus, Tiberius, Domitian, and others. Trifling remains there are of earlier date, Nectanebus, the last *native* King of Egypt; but the real founder was Ptolemy Physcon, or 'the Fat.' Its other chief associations are with Cleopatra and the worship of Isis.

Speaking frankly, the place is vastly overpraised. The temple is not Egyptian, but a poor attempt at restoration. Physcon wished to conciliate the priests; hence you have a bastard architecture, part Greek, part Egyptian. The colossal bas-reliefs of kings seizing captives by the hair of their heads (as in the ancient sculptures of Rameses) were carved by kings who never moved out of their palaces in Alexandria; and the forms of Egyptian art are imitated long after all meaning in those forms has passed away. Its later history

shows it to have been a sort of tea-garden for Roman emperors.

The Irrigation Department have formally announced that they cannot supply sufficient water for cultivation, and in face of this fact every archæological objection must be reconsidered.

If it be true that 'a fact registered on the spot is worth a cart-load of argument,' then the drawing which ends this chapter should tell its own story. The sketch for it was made with great care at Esneh in the early part of March, 1892. Then the river was so low that it required *four* shadoofs to raise the water on to the land. Coming down a month later, there were six shadoofs at twenty yards apart (in some places ten yards apart only). The difference in level between high and low Nile is about forty feet.

We note that the Egyptian Government consents that the dam as now proposed should be twenty-seven feet lower than the one first planned; that would, to that amount of level, lessen the height of water stored.

Sir Benjamin Baker declares that at small cost he would so preserve Philæ that no harm would be done. The surmise that harm would be done to ruins *lower down*, which it is said 'may' contain treasures, is by many experts not considered a valid objection. If every attempt to improve the cultivation of the land

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and increase the prosperity of the people were to be met by objectors whose love for the dead past overrides their care for the living—if that were to be the rule in future, then progress in Egypt would be stayed, for the land is full of dead.



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